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# OUR CLOSING DAYS

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

BY

W. J. HOUSE

1936

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## OUR CLOSING DAYS

2 CHRONICLES 16:7-14; 20:31-37; 21:1; 24:15-27;  
26:16-23

IT is to be carefully noted that at the close of every distinct period of God's ways, as the time draws near to the new one, the hostility and intense activity of Satan increase, in order that what is of God should decline and thus virtually be defeated. David said, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." God is never defeated, He must triumph. Pharaoh's great desire to drown all the male children of Israel, was to extinguish the people of God, so that if they went out, it should be only the old ones among them. But Moses was born, and his parents were able to preserve his life. Then we see in the dark days of Eli how the young element was preserved in Samuel by Hannah, who dedicated him to the service of God from his birth. His life was spent in the temple, and he grew on before the Lord, until everyone from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established a prophet.

In the dark days of the apostasy that came into Judah through the house of Ahab, Athaliah set herself to destroy the seed royal. She determined not to leave one person capable of pro-

ducing a king—the seed royal. She wanted to be queen that she might entice everyone to the worship of Baal. Joash was preserved by being hidden in the house of the Lord for six years, under the hand of Jehoiada the priest.

I wish to take up that side, and to speak to those who are coming to the close of their days. The close of our lives may be near for any one of us. The Lord Himself is a model to each one. At the age of twelve He is outstanding as sitting in the temple. He was hearing and asking questions. The Lord would bring that before us in view of our education that we might be marked off in that way to-day, sitting and listening as affected by Jesus. The Lord Jesus is a model for us as He is seen in all the strength and energy of manhood. When He “began to be about thirty years of age,” He is ready to stand and publicly identify Himself with what is of God upon the earth, however much it is in reproach. John says, “I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me ? ” Jesus answered, “Suffer it to be so now : for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Thus at the age of thirty Jesus fulfilled all righteousness in every detail of life, in the strength and service of manhood.

He is also a model for those who are drawing near to the close of their journey, His closing days and moments stand out as a great monument for all those who are facing the end of their days.

Think of the last words uttered by Jesus, the last act He performed! The will of God had brought Him to death, even to the death of the cross, and He bowed His head in perfect, holy submission to that will. In such a place that we, thank God, shall never see, and in such a death He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. What a model to those who are drawing near to the end, to submit without reserve to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even if it be to depart from this life.

The kings referred to in the scriptures in Chronicles all came to the end of their journey and died. They had been used of God and all had their part in those days of recovery which correspond to our day. The Lord has graciously recovered much truth, and has used many persons in His service, as these kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, and Uzziah had been used in their day. They stand out as warnings to us as well, as in the way of encouragement, to challenge us as to what kind of end ours may be. One loves to think of the end of such a man as the apostle Paul. In his beginning his whole being had been handed over to Christ—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Later he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," I am ready to be offered up, and if I be poured out I rejoice with you all. That is how God desires His servants to end.

Peter had a mixed beginning and history, but he judged himself step by step and he faces his end with the utmost acceptance of the will of God. He said, "shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." He is prepared to serve the saints and to consider for them right up to his last day. The Lord had spoken to him of His sheep and His lambs, and he was prepared to serve them until his last day.

The Spirit of God records the end of these kings that we might receive instructions and be warned. Some departed from God at the outset, but others had a bright, happy and useful beginning, and in the case of Jehoshaphat and Asa, their reigns were for the honour of God and the blessing of Israel.

Asa was a wonderful king and was greatly helped of God. He dealt with idolatry and put away his own mother from being queen because she built a grove. The Spirit of God records this so that we may see the integrity of his heart. When a million Ethiopians came against Israel, he said to the Lord, "it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power." He faces this great army of Ethiopians in complete dependence upon God, and God delivered him. He also brought in a teaching

priest and helped to feed God's people, and for years they had peace and prosperity.

Later on Israel came against him and he went into the house of God and took the silver and the gold out to the king of Syria and said, "There is a league between me and thee." One would not speak against these men of God except as warnings to us ; but when there is a difficulty and the enemy is challenging the position, shall we take the silver and gold out of the house of God and hand it over to the Syrian and make a league with him ? Asa did so in spite of his good reign in other respects, he sacrificed the honour of the Lord to keep peace. There is no hope on that line, and Hanani the seer comes and says, "from henceforth thou shalt have wars." If a brother or a gathering acts thus, they too will have war. Silver denotes the rights of God, and the gold His honour. Previously Asa had listened to Oded the seer, and was greatly encouraged after the prophet had spoken : but now he is in a rage with the seer, and puts Hanani in the prison-house. I believe that the prophetic word spoken in meetings of that character may sometimes be in the form of rebuke, and this we do not like.

Afterwards, at the end of his life, Asa had disease in his feet, suggesting that something had been wrong somewhere in his movements which he had not judged. The Spirit of God does not disclose what this was, but instead of turning

to the Lord and judging it he turned to the physicians. This stands as a warning to us, to go on in the path of dependence. The only thing that brightened the closing moments of his day was that he was buried in the sepulchre that he himself had excavated. It is a great day when we come to realise what we are naturally, and when we can excavate a sepulchre for ourselves so that we may go out of sight. The Spirit of God records that as a commendation. They made great burnings for Asa and put much spices in the grave, for in the main he was greatly loved by his people.

Jehoshaphat was one of Judah's greatest kings, and he was not characterised by idolatry, but the Spirit of God does not hide the fact that there was a tendency in Jehoshaphat to make an alliance with the house of Israel by marriage. He said to Ahab, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people," and the Lord rebuked him about it. Nevertheless, afterwards in the main he pursued what was right. At the end of his days he was in alliance with Ahab's son and so stands out as a warning to us that as our history closes we should make no alliance with what is spiritually corrupt. Jehoshaphat suffered for this alliance in that his works were broken by God. In like manner God would have us to judge in ourselves what has been dishonouring to Him.

Joash was also a good king, one who served Israel

faithfully and was greatly interested in the house of God. He ordered Jehoiada to repair the house of God and to gather up the redemption money, to bring the allegiance of every Israelite to the house of God, the half-shekel due from all. God was with Joash all the days of Jehoiada, and Jehoiada's life was extended, showing how God would preserve a spiritual influence for us over a long period. Jehoiada lived a hundred and thirty years, and he died gloriously and was buried as a king. If we continue characteristically as priests, we shall be buried in the sepulchre of the kings when we die. All the days of Jehoiada, Joash was greatly helped of God and his reign brought blessing. He sent out Levites to teach the people; but after the priestly influence was removed, the princes came to him and did obeisance. Thus his heart was diverted so that he became a centre for himself; God was no longer the centre and he turned to idolatry. That leads to a rebuke by the prophet, the son of Jehoiada, who comes to him with the word of God, and it says that the prophet was slain in the court of the house of God by the king's commandment. What a word to us! If we decline from priestly influence, and if what is for God is displaced in our hearts and self becomes the centre, we may even murder a prophet in the court of the house of the Lord, as Joash did. He falls under the power of his enemies and dies with "great diseases." Instead of dying like

Jacob, or Jehoiada, or Peter, or Paul, he dies in ignominy and is not buried with the kings.

Uzziah was greatly helped in the early part of his reign, until he became strong. He built towers in the wilderness, made water supplies, built storehouses, he loved husbandry, and he established the teaching of the law amongst the people. But when he became strong, his heart was lifted up, and he went into the house of God and attempted to offer incense. He usurped the place of the priest and God smote him with leprosy in his forehead, so that he was a leper to the day of his death. What a warning it is to us that only as we are marked by what is priestly can we have to do with the service of God. If we carry it on by mere natural ability or effort, and as a ruler, it does not please God, however much we may have been used of Him earlier in our lives, and He does not overlook that. Uzziah is smitten with leprosy and dies a leper. Isaiah writes his acts "first and last," and in chapter 6 he says, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." This great vision appears to Isaiah on the death of a man who attempted to serve God in human power and not on priestly lines. We need to come to that year, "the year that king Uzziah died," and if we do, a marvellous vision of the glory will come before our souls. One would speak especially to the young men, of

the necessity of coming to that year. If the vision of the glory is to fill our souls, the wonderful train that fills the temple, typifying divine workmanship in the saints, we must come to the year of the death of king Uzziah, to the end of that man who attempted to carry on the service of God without the priest, without holiness, without consideration for God. He thought to do it because he was the king, but the title to do it is that holiness and consideration for God is there, and this is what marked Jehoiada.

One feels that we should all face this matter of our closing days. It may not be long for any of us, and it certainly will not be long for many. Nothing is more blessed than the death of the righteous, and one delights to acknowledge and recognise those who pursue righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives. This is what is in mind in the coming of Christ, that there should be holiness and righteousness all the days, including the last days till He come. They are the most testing days; as years go on there is a tendency to relaxation and an assumption to serve God without priestly state, or a sense of dependence, such as marked Asa when he was angry with the prophet who rebuked him.

The Lord spoke of Himself as the beginning and the end, and the "first and the last." He marks the beginning of each of us and He will see us through according to God. He said to His

disciples, "I am with you all the days." They will be days of vigour and devotedness and true manhood in the service of God. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." If our hearts would keep in touch with Him in dependence and, under the influence of the Spirit, be apart from corrupt and unholy associations, and refuse to touch the service of God in human power and ability, recognising the Spirit only, then our end will be like the end of Jehoiada at a hundred and thirty. He was a priest according to God. He exercised the service of a king and they buried him in the sepulchre of the kings, for he had done good to Israel.

May the Lord help us all that our end may be free from the features that mark these four kings; that we may not rest in what there may have been for God in the early part of our lives, but that we may be warned by them to avoid their end till the Lord comes.

## THE ONE GREATER THAN SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 9 : 1-12. REVELATION 11 : 1

I WOULD just remind the brethren of the Lord's words as to this incident. He says that the queen of Sheba "came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." Then He says, "behold, more than Solomon is here," Matt. 12 : 42. The Lord Jesus is more than Solomon ; He is all that Solomon was, but He is more. He is "the wisdom of God" ; as the apostle says, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1 : 24. I trust that some have come this afternoon like the queen of Sheba. Perhaps they have come from "the ends of the earth"—their hearts far away from God's centre, which is Christ. He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John 12 : 32. He is the centre of attraction round which everything moves which is of God.

Now I want to say a word about what the queen of Sheba *saw* when she came. She saw what I trust any inquirer may see in the town in which we live. Wherever Christ is enthroned, wherever the Spirit of God is among His people, these are the things that are to be seen. It says

she *saw* "the wisdom of Solomon." Where did she see it? It does not say she heard it; she *saw* it in his servants, in those that loved him, in the house that he had built, in the steps that he had erected to go up to the house of God, in the food that he supplied, in the clothing of his servants. It says of Solomon that God gave him "wisdom . . . and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore," 1 Kings 4 : 29. Think of a heart like that—as large as the sand that is on the sea shore—a heart that could even think of all the people of God, right down to this day.

It says Solomon spoke of the trees "from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," 1 Kings 4 : 33. I have no doubt the queen of Sheba heard something of all this. The cedar is the king of trees—it speaks of dignity according to God such as was seen in Christ, while the hyssop speaks of His lowliness—His readiness to come in wherever the smallest opportunity is left for Him to do so, like the hyssop which springs out of the wall. We may think of the Lord thus as He comes before us in John 4—He was ready even to take a place in that woman's heart. He was lowly enough to come into a dying robber's heart. That is the hyssop. That robber also saw in Him the King; he says: "thy *kingdom*"—he saw the glory of the cedar there.

Solomon spoke of beasts, 1 Kings 4 : 33, of the

lion that "turneth not away for any," Prov. 30 : 30—that is Christ ; He never turned back. He spoke of the lamb—the one so lowly, accessible, and lovable. What little boy or little girl does not love a lamb ? Everybody loves a little lamb ; the lamb also brings Jesus before us. He spoke of the birds ; of the eagle with all its strength, its wings enabling it to mount up. The Lord could Himself go up into heaven. Solomon could speak of the sparrow : "a sparrow alone upon the housetop" is spoken of in Psalm 102. Nobody wants a sparrow, it is outside of man's life, alone on the housetop—that is Jesus. He spoke of the fishes ; they are all at His service. If He would make use of a great fish, He can create one. If He requires one with a penny in its mouth, He can supply it, for all the fishes are His. He controls the sea.

We can see thus a little of what might have been brought out by Solomon in his wisdom. You can understand the queen of Sheba being greatly impressed. It says when she saw "*the house that he had built*, and the food of his table, and the deportment of his servants, and the order of service of his attendants and their apparel, and his cup-bearers and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah, there was no more spirit in her." I wonder whether you have seen that house. The apostle says, "... whose house are we," Heb. 3 : 6. The house that Christ builds is not of brick and stone, it is a spiritual house

made up of persons, every one of them loving Christ, every one of them having received the Holy Spirit. It is Christ's building. The queen of Sheba saw it in figure.

Then it says she saw "the food of his table." There never was such food. In Sheba they did not have that food, nor in Egypt; they may have cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, but they do not have the food of Solomon's table. The apostle says, "ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils," 1 Cor. 10:21. The Lord has a table; an abundance of spiritual food for His people. When the Lord said, "Take, eat: this is *my body*," Matt. 26:26—His precious body laid down in death out of love for us—He was calling attention to one kind of food that is provided for His people. Then He said as to the cup, "Drink ye all of it," Matt. 26:27. The queen of Sheba had never seen food like that of Solomon's table. It is the best food available anywhere; it would build up a constitution that would strengthen us for the service of God. The material food we eat will perish, Scripture says it perishes, John 6:27; but the strength we gather by the spiritual food the Lord provides will remain. It strengthens us in view of eternity, in view of our place in heaven. In Matthew and Mark it says that after the supper "when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." How can one go up to the holy moun-

tain of the spiritual sphere, except as strengthened by spiritual food?

Then it says "the deportment of his servants." Servants in Sheba did not deport themselves like that, nor in Egypt. How did Solomon's servants deport themselves? The Lord shows us the character of such service; He says, "he that is chief" among you let him be "as he that doth serve," and "I am among you as he that serveth," Luke 22:27. That is not how the servants of the world comport themselves, they are all looking for uniform, medals, ecclesiastical robes; but Solomon's servants do not do that. They deport themselves like Christ—with His spirit. All that greatly impressed the queen of Sheba.

"And the order of service of his attendants," the *order* of it. There was no confusion in the attendance, every attendant had his place. The priests had their place, the captains had their place, those who had control of the food had their place. All the servants had their duty, as the Lord says, He gave "to every man his work," Mark 13:34. Each Christian has his work. There is no confusion, no trying to replace one another in Solomon's realm.

"And their apparel." The queen looked round and noticed how they were clothed. What delight to look round and see how Christians are dressed, specially in these days! They are not dressed like the world, with short hair, painted faces and

finger nails. They are dressed as Solomon's servants. How are they dressed? "Let thy garments be always white," it says in Ecclesiastes 9:8. That is how Solomon's servants are clothed: always in white—that is, in purity. In their homes, between husband and wife, parents and children, in business, amongst the saints—purity. That is how Solomon's servants were clothed.

"And his cupbearers and their apparel." Cupbearers—what a wonderful service that is. Are we His cupbearers? Do we minister refreshment to the true Solomon? Do we make His heart glad—that blessed heart that was broken in sorrow? "Reproach hath broken my heart," He says in Psalm 69:20. "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. 53:3. Now He has millions of cupbearers bringing Him that which makes His heart glad. We may well recall what Joseph's servant says, speaking of his master's silver cup: "Is not this it in which my lord drinks, and in which indeed he divines?" Gen. 44:5. Have we stolen Joseph's cup? You say: Joseph's servant put it in the sack; but he only did what they had done. Those ten brothers had stolen Joseph's portion, they had robbed him of what was due to him. Their sheaves should have bowed down to him, the stars were to bow down to him—it was his cup, it was what God had appointed to him and they had robbed him of it. So he raises the question with them: Where is my cup, my silver

cup? And they bring it back to him—they acknowledge he is lord. That is the silver cup, his lordship over them. They bow down to him, they say: “we are my lord’s servants”; he drinks thus out of his cup. Do we carry the silver cup to Him? Are we His cupbearers? Is He our Lord, our only Lord? Other lords have had dominion over us, but Jude says He is “our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.” These cupbearers are all clothed in white. They do not say, “Lord, Lord,” without meaning it. They do mean it, they obey Him, they confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord.

“And his *ascent* by which he went up to the house of Jehovah.” That is perhaps one of the greatest things of all. You can think of the queen of Sheba’s eyes fixed on that ascent, to see the way by which this wonderful king went up to God. David is spoken of as coming down. Eliab said to David: “Why art thou come down?” He went down into the valley. What a descent Jesus has made! “He that descended is the same also that ascended,” Eph. 4:10, but first of all he descended like David; He came down to the battle-field, He came down where the giant was, He came down where death was, where man could do nothing, where every heart was filled with fear. Where did He come from? He “came down from heaven,” John 3:13. He is the second Man, out of heaven, He is God “manifest in the flesh,” come down as Man to the earth, come down to

face the enemy, to annul him that had the power of death, to take Goliath's sword and use it Himself. Death is in the hand of Jesus now. He has come down so that every heart should love Him. After David came up from the valley, the women showed the affections of the people towards him, and sang his praises: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," 1 Sam. 18 : 7. Jonathan's soul was knit with the soul of David and he "loved him as his own soul." Who does not love Christ—the One who came down from heaven, came down into the valley, went down into death, overthrew the power of death? The Lord has triumphed gloriously. The queen of Sheba saw Solomon's ascent; she saw the way by which he went up to the house of God. How wonderful those steps by which He went up! The Lord Jesus went up into heaven; the first step was out of the grave. Standing there at the grave-side, He says: "Mary." He is no longer in death. The angel says: "He is not here: . . . Come, see the place where the Lord lay," Matt. 28 : 6; but He is not there now. The Lord Jesus is out of death; what a wonderful step that is! Then He was taken up to heaven. Luke says He was "carried up"; Mark says He was "received up into heaven"; in John He says, "I ascend" He goes up by His own proper right. Peter says in Acts, "Whom the heaven must receive," chap. 3 : 21. If you are to be in Solomon's courts, you must

receive Him. It was not a question of forcing His way into heaven, heaven received Him. Paul says He was "received up in glory," 1 Tim. 3 : 16. And He "ascended up far above all heavens"—not simply heaven ; each heaven is a step. Resurrection is one step and then the heavens are each a step. The first heaven, the second heaven ; then there is the third heaven. Paul went up to the third heaven, and the Lord has gone into the third heaven—into paradise. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—that is the third heaven, He has gone higher than that. In the type the queen of Sheba watches the ascent. Jesus has "ascended up far above all heavens," Eph. 4 : 10. When the queen of Sheba saw this in type, it says : "there was no more spirit in her," and she became a worshipper, that was all that was left to her to do. Her enigmas are answered, her soul is filled with the glory of Solomon and the great house that he had built, the food of his table, the way his servants behaved, the order of his attendants and how they are dressed, his cupbearers and how they are dressed, and the ascent by which he went up into the house of God. She becomes a worshipper.

The Lord came to the well of Sychar ; He went there to attract one more human heart to God. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John 4 : 10. Who is it that has come

near to men? If the woman had known who it was, she would have asked and He would have given her "living water." Then the Lord says: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." All true worship is in the light of the glory of Christ. That is in figure what the queen of Sheba reached.

"She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and spices in very great abundance, and precious stones; neither was there any such spice as that which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon," *v.* 9. "And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides what she had brought to the king. And she turned and went to her own land, she and her servants," *v.* 12. The queen of Sheba now comes out as a giver. What can we give to the Lord? "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof," Psa. 24:1. The silver and gold are His, "the cattle upon a thousand hills" are His. What could you and I give Him? "My son, give me thine heart," He says, Prov. 23:26; that is what we can give Him. That is what gold and spices mean—the fragrance and beauty of a heart that loves Christ. The queen of Sheba gave it to Solomon, and he gave her *everything* she wanted. What would she desire? She would not desire the world's pleasures after seeing Solomon; she would not want the latest novel, nor the pictures. What would she want? Something that would

speak to her of Solomon, of Christ. The Lord will answer any such desire. That is what the Lord said to the woman in John 4: "Whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life." That fountain is the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The greatest gift that God can give us is the Holy Spirit: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," Luke 11:13. He gave her "all her desire"—the Holy Spirit answers to that.

Just a word or two about Revelation 11:1. That is a very sobering scripture for us to take account of. John is given a reed to measure with, "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship in it." "*Measure the temple*"; does it come up to the divine measurements? If you were to put God's measurements alongside the cathedrals of men, would they come up to the divine standards? In God's temple everything saith, Glory, Psa. 29:9—not the glory of man, you would never hear a word about that in God's temple. There is no burying-place for great men of the world in God's temple; there are no flags of any nation flying over God's temple. In God's temple everything speaks of God's glory, and the glory of Christ. If I go to God's temple, all are occupied with God and Christ, and all

that speaks of divine glory—nothing else has any place. I never hear any other name but that of divine Persons. It is all for divine glory. “*Measure it,*” it says. Measure what represents the temple locally in this town. Is that what we have—something for the glory of God, for the glory of Jesus? It says: *Measure it.* Let us measure it, let us see whether what we are connected with corresponds to the divine standard.

Then it says: “*measure . . . the altar.*” The altar is the means of approach to God—how we draw near to God; the altar is where the sacrifice is put. What would happen if all the altars of christendom were measured? They would not answer to the divine measurements. The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of this. Christ is the altar; the altar is greater than the sacrifice. It is the altar that sanctifies the sacrifice. Where is such an altar? Only in Jesus. “By him . . . let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,” Heb. 13:15. Do we possess that altar?

Finally it says: “*Measure . . . them that worship in it*”; measure the worshippers. Christendom measures the worship, but God measures the worshippers. The idea in the world is that so long as there is good music, a good building, and a learned service, it is acceptable to God. But God says: *Measure the worshippers*—measure the persons; what are they like? That is the great point.

The Lord says, "the Father seeketh *such*"—that is the persons. He does not seek organs, vestments, or prayer-books. He seeks persons whose hearts love Him and love Christ. *Measure them*, it says. Each one of us has to face this. When the Lord measures us, what does He find? Do we answer to the divine requirements?

One would just leave these thoughts with us. The Lord help us to see this wonderful scene, that we might become worshippers—worshippers of God, worshippers of Jesus—for His name's sake.

## LOVERS OF GOD

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5; ROMANS 8:26-29;

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-3; 2:7-12

It is the desire of God to have lovers. The apostle Paul speaks of those who love God. God's desire to have such is so great that He commands it, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." It is imperative according to the divine standard, and He wants thousands to love Him. Scripture speaks of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. Daniel tells us that *thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.* It is a wonderful suggestion when God speaks of the "thousands of them that love me."

God wants lovers who will love Him with all the heart, all the soul, all the strength, and all the mind. He is not content with fragments, with the tail-end of our lives, with a few odd moments on our knees at bed-time. He wants no movement in the heart except what is of Himself, no desire apart from Him, no strength wasted, no thought of which He is not the object. God is so blessed, so worthy, He is to have it all and He wants thousands of thousands like that.

Behind all this lies the heart of God, and He has made Himself known in such a way that He will absorb the whole being of so many. It was the desires of love on the part of God that led to this command for lovers, and what He is, has been so declared that He must be loved.

In contrast, think of those who hate God; those of whom the Lord said, "now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Awful contemplation! that the human heart should be so alienated from God, that it should forget and hate Him. What a range of things fills the hearts of men in the last days, as 2 Timothy 3 tells us—anything except God. Men love even themselves. We live in the most selfish day in history. In every sphere, self is enthroned. What man loves rules him. What controls the heart, controls the being. Thus everything gives place to what ministers to self. There are also lovers of money; it has taken God's place. How we see it all around with its accompanying sorrows, which pierce men and drown them in perdition. Then, lovers of pleasure—how many devotees at that altar! We see everything sacrificed to it. There are those also who love and make a lie. If men did not love the lie, the bookshops would soon be closed. The same is found in the religious world. At bottom, men know it is all a lie, but they love it because it is a lie; indeed, the whole world is a lie, a sham, but men love it. Again we see how pre-eminence is

loved by men, and the love of it will lead them to anything.

The divine thought is "lovers of *God*." How this is exemplified in Christ! Not one affection stirred His heart but God was its centre. From Bethlehem to Calvary, God was the object of His every desire. "I have spent my strength," He could say. It was used to serve God. Though weary, He would continue His journey to find one worshipper. His strength was weakened in the way—the way to Calvary. Not a thought, but God was its object; as it is written of Him, "Oh how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Every morning, His ear was opened to hear, as the instructed. We see in Him the perfect model of a lover of God.

Now we may see what God is prepared to do for His lovers. What gain there is in this, what blessedness! "If any man love God, the same is known of him." God knows such a one altogether. He knew Christ, that great Lover. He was unknown among men, but well known in heaven. Only heaven and a few in touch with heaven knew of His birth. Then those thirty years—who knows of that secret life in Egypt, at Nazareth, hidden from the world? None of us knows much about it; God knew it all. At the end of it He could say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I *have* found my delight." This was a review of those thirty years. Every prayer, every action,

every step, every thought had been watched. It came out at His baptism, He was known of God.

So it is with all God's lovers. Of course in one sense He knows everybody. He knows every fowl on the mountains; not one sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. He knows the wicked afar off. But this passage means that He knows him intimately. We see this in Abraham, the friend of God. A friend loves at all times, be they dark or bright; whether in plenty or in little. Abraham is called *the* friend of God. And God says, "I know him," and further, "walk before me"; so that God could look at him as he walked. The preposition is "*before*," not "*with*." God would have it thus with every lover of His and would give each one the sense that He knows them favourably and intimately. Better to be known of God than of the world. It is a poor thing to be known by the king, compared to what it is to be known of God. Again, the scripture says, "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." The basis of that is that Moses was a lover of God.

What will not God do for those who love Him? Jesus loved Lazarus and He would go to the place where they were prepared to stone Him for Lazarus' sake. Romans 8 helps here. We *do not* know what to pray for as is fitting, but we *do* know that all things work together for good to those that love God. He has such an interest in

His lovers that He uses all His power, His wisdom and His riches to make all things work together for good to those who love Him ; not for everybody, but for His lovers. Note the word *together*, that is, these things are made to co-ordinate, so that everything that may come upon His lovers will work for good. This is seen in the pathway of Jesus. God was behind all His movements, as we may see in Luke 7. If He goes to the house of a proud Pharisee, God caused that one should come in there who did not cease to kiss His feet. Calvary is the great expression of the love of God, and that He is behind everything to bring good out of it. Through it, there will be brought to light the myriads of the redeemed who all love God.

So it will be with us in the measure we love God. Whatever may come upon us—sickness, difficulties in circumstances, unjust accusations or trials, God is so great that if we love Him He will cause any or all of these things to work together for our good. Lovers of God do not think these things are against them. Our great concern is, not merely to recover our health, not to overcome the difficulties, not to prove we have been unjustly accused ; but to see to it that we love God, and then we can confidently leave all these matters in His hand. “We *do* know that all things work together,” etc. We may and do have many solemn exercises about many things, but the greater exercise is to love God, and that means

that no room is left in the heart for any idol.

The apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." They have such a place in His heart, He values them so much, that He has prepared, there has been deliberate activity, there is a plan and a process to prepare for God's lovers what the human heart could never dream of. There is a place prepared for such in the Father's house. Wonderful thought! in a sphere where only love prevails; where there is conscious relationship. The city too is prepared for them, the city that Abraham looked for, whose Builder and Maker is God. "He hath prepared for them a city," Heb. 11:16. What a city! God's city has only one street, a golden street. There is no false step; every movement is transparent, no dark underhand movements. It has a wonderful temple. God and the Lamb are that temple. There is no need of the sun, for the glory of God is the light, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof, and a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flows out of the throne. We belong to that city, for our citizenship is in heaven. This is but one of the things that God has prepared, and He would give us to enjoy it now. Indeed according to Hebrews 12 we have come to it now, the "city of the living God."

The new heaven and new earth are prepared

for a people who love God. What a scene—where there is no distance between God and His lovers ! He is their God, Rev. 21 : 3. How attractive all this is ! It would help us to judge idolatry. John closes his first epistle thus : “Children, keep yourselves from idols,” the idols of self, money, pleasure, pre-eminence, etc. When we know what God would do, that we are known of Him, and the things He has prepared, our hearts are surely attracted to come into this position of loving Him.

What is this love for God ? How is it expressed ? There are people who say they will not believe unless they see. But nobody has ever seen love, it is a spiritual thing, yet nobody can deny that love exists. And where love is, it is expressed. Now love for God is expressed in a twofold way, by obedience and by sacrifice. These two great expressions of love are seen pre-eminently in Christ ; in Him they shine. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Then His love found expression in sacrifice ; how great the sacrifice of Himself ! Now what good is there for us to say we love God if we do not obey Him ? “Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.” Love enjoins and love obeys. “Children, let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth.” So that the great expression of love in a believer is that he is subject.

Love is also seen in sacrifice. This is how love

came to us. "Hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us." When we see a believer holding his body, not for pleasure but for God's service, we see the mark of love. Or he may spend his time in considering for the Lord's interests. This costs something, it is a proof of love. Or money or a home may be similarly used, it is love appearing. God's love came this way. "God so loved that he gave." "Herein is love . . . that he . . . sent his Son."

This measures us all. The measure of our love is the measure of our obedience and our sacrifice. But it is precious to God. He takes special interest in one like that; He will cause everything in his history to work out for good.

Let us see to it then that we are not lovers of self, of pleasure, of money, but lovers of God, so that we may taste the sweetness of these things, and let us all join in saying, "We love him, because he first loved us."

## THE LORD'S WORK

REVELATION 1:4-6; 5:6-10; 1 CHRONICLES 23:1-6

I DESIRE to say a few words that might help us to understand a little more what the Lord is doing at the present time. Scripture speaks of the work of God and the part of it that is finished. It says, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them," wonderful work! These wonderful works were done by Christ, that blessed Person whom we know as our Lord Jesus Christ. John says: "All things were made by him"; and Paul that He is the "firstborn of all creation; because by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth . . . all things have been created by him and for him," and Moses tells us that they were "finished," Gen. 2:1, implying that there was nothing whatever to be added to them. None could suggest any improvement on the work of God, the expanse in which He set the sun, the moon, the stars: He has established the ordinances of the heavens, Pleiades and the bands of Orion, and we realise there is nothing unfinished about them.

Then, too, what a wonderful sphere the earth is, on which many millions of people are provided for every day. It says, "the king himself

is served by the field," Eccles. 5 : 9 ; all are sustained by the infinite resources that the Creator has put in the earth. God's workmanship is seen in the flowers, the insects, the birds—God says to Job, "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom ? " Job 39 : 26. Our bodies, too, reveal the wonderful work of God, but He is not inactive because this phase of His work is "finished." It does indeed say that God rested from His work on the seventh day and was refreshed, Exod. 31 : 17, but that does not mean that He has ceased to work since that time. The Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," and I desire, with the Lord's help, to say a few words on what the Lord is doing now. We could never compass all His work, but I would like to speak of four features of the work of the Lord at this present time.

Scripture does not disclose how long God took to create the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1 : 1, but we are told that He prepared the earth from a state of chaos and emptiness for man in six days. If God brought forth conditions suited to man in six days, what must be the magnitude and glory of what the Father has done "hitherto" and of what the Lord is now doing during six thousand years ! I read these passages to bring before us the great thought of what the Lord is doing now.

In the first passage the apostle John tells us of the One who loves us. In worship he comes to it, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our

sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom." The One who made the worlds, "All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made," this One is said to have made us a kingdom. This is a very great and glorious matter, and John is in the light of it, that God is making a great and eternal kingdom—the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The thought of making involves a process, it is not quite the same as creation, which was by command, and it stood fast. Making implies deliberation and a certain process to bring about a result. "Let us make man," it does not only say that God created him. God is our Creator ; but God formed man and he is fearfully and wonderfully made. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, showing there was a process in the making.

Now the Lord is making a kingdom and He has great pleasure in this kingdom, which He is making in our hearts. When we receive the glad tidings we are attached to His kingdom ; He is making us. One loves the gospel because it tells of the God who translates us from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Our blessed Saviour Himself comes before us, and in the power of what is seen in Him, the soul moves out as delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. We become part of His kingdom ; He is our Lord and we become subject to Him ; an extension of His

kingdom is thus secured in hearts in which He rules.

Now that is what the Lord is doing, He is bringing us under control in a practical way. It does not operate in its fulness all at once, for many things claim the hearts of young Christians, and indeed all of us. We all have to say, "other lords beside thee have had dominion over us"; but I am sure the desire is that He only should be Lord to us, and that loyalty to Him should be maintained. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, God has established it and the work of God cannot be shaken, it will stand for ever. It is the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, it is the work of God and of Christ which has been going on for six thousand years, and is still going on now. It is a much greater thing than the establishing of the heavens to rule over the earth, which God did in a day. This kingdom is a process going on little by little as the blessed influence of the love of Christ becomes more deeply rooted in our hearts. The power is love and it is a constraining power. The apostle says, "the love of the Christ constrains us, having judged this: that one died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised," 2 Cor. 5: 14. The Lord is establishing His kingdom through the activity of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Little

by little the process goes on in the heart of every believer, and thus His kingdom is established. It is true, and will be true to eternity, that unto us there is one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Then in Revelation 5 He is making other things, or persons. The elders say, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth." The Lord is seen there as the One who makes kings, not crowning them, but making them. On that line, our life here is not too long for the process. It is so great a matter that we need every moment that God leaves us here. What marks the kings is that they are like Him. Of Gideon's brethren it was said, "As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king." Gideon said, "They were my brethren," they had kingly features. How we need to make room for the Lord's work to appear in kingly features, in contrast to the contemptible and worthless character that marks us all naturally—to make room for the formation of what is kingly, for in Scripture a true king is one who is beautiful. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." A king is one who is dignified, who is glorious, who is able to rule. It is the idea of a person who is supreme.

We have to be made, but not so the Lord—He was born a King. As to His own Person, He is the King of kings; kingly features were always there, but as coming into manhood it was said, "Where is he that is born King . . .?" So this great Maker of kings takes us in hand to instruct us and to form us that we may bear kingly features, and that we may be able to rule. The first portion of territory over which I rule is my own spirit. A person who rules his own spirit is greater than he that takes a city, Prov. 16:32. No one can be trusted with extensive territory until he has learned to control his own spirit, so that it does not get out of hand. I am quite sure the older brethren will agree that it takes a long time. That kind of a king cannot be made in a day; it is a lifelong exercise to learn to control one's own spirit. This applies also to our bodies; the apostle said he buffeted his body, indicating that he would not allow it to dominate him. How often we lose ground by our natural desires assuming control, or our spirits, and by our not allowing the Lord to control all. With many a Christian the love of money becomes the dominating power, and like the brethren of Joseph, the place that Christ should have in their hearts is sacrificed for money.

A king does not act like that, he rules his spirit and has control over his body and over his money. It is most important for all of us that we should have our businesses under control, and that we

should hold them rightly in relation to the Lord. This applies also to the home. Many of the sisters are dominated by their homes, but the house is not to rule them, they are to rule the house. That is the sphere where they are being made kings by the skill and wisdom of the Lord.

I come now to what the elders say, which is that "Thou . . . hast . . . made them . . . priests" —a most magnificent thought! These twenty-four elders represent what has been gathered up by the Lord. He has gathered up kings and a kingdom; they are round His throne and are His kingdom, and His throne dominates them. They are His kings, each has a crown and all are sitting on thrones. There are millions of them, not merely twenty-four, but these are representative of all. Also they all have golden bowls full of incense.

The process of making us priests is a most intensive one. What marks a true priest is holiness, a preparedness to consider for God on all occasions and to be able to bless. The priests stand and bless. The priest's lips keep knowledge and one learns the law at his mouth. Think of the precious grace of Christ that takes up you and me and transforms us by His own work so that we qualify to be priests! The apostle speaks to the Corinthians of the various kinds of evil-doers who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and then he says, "such were some of you." If we read the list we all have to admit how humbling it is. He

adds, "ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. 6:11. Think of the precious grace that would win your heart and add you to His kingdom, making you a king and a priest. It is a time when He considers for God, He is able to bring the odour of the holy incense before God. These elders say, "thou . . . hast . . . made them . . . priests," they are His workmanship. It is something infinitely greater than the creatorial power of God in the physical creation, but it is a kingdom over which Christ is exalted as King, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There are myriads of kings who are crowned and able to rule for God in the world to come. "Be thou also over five cities," said the Lord to one who had been faithful.

Priests are marked by holiness. Perhaps some of us may know a little about righteousness, but what do we know of holiness? That shrinking from evil in our spirits, and the abhorrence of it. Peter speaks of a holy priesthood, and it is seen in these elders. They are able to stand before God and to present incense, everyone of them having vials.

It is a magnificent spectacle, myriads and myriads of holy priests having golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints.

In Chronicles we have another feature of what is made. There we have what David is said to

have made, "the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith." David is the chief musician, the sweet psalmist of Israel, and he is king David in majesty, glory, victory, and power. Then he is a priest, for he wore the linen ephod and danced before the ark. We also have the prayers of David the son of Jesse. This company of four thousand singers were to use the instruments "which I made, said David, to praise therewith."

I want to touch upon this making instruments to praise therewith, as part of the work of Christ. One loves to think of the Lord making instruments of music. Music is a great matter with God. I love to look at the saints as the instruments which Christ has made. In the Psalms David speaks of a great variety of instruments, the greatest perhaps is the harp, and these are the instruments in the hands of the elders in Revelation 5. The harp is an instrument which expresses the most beautiful music as the strings are tightened and tuned under the hand of Christ. Then there is the pipe, which is breathed into—showing that it comes from the spirit, so to speak, the trumpets to sound aloud, and the cymbals that the hands use to make a sound. Thus the Lord is operating over this long period to make His instruments; He intends to have an orchestra. If you read the last few Psalms, particularly the last one, you will see how the different notes come in, and all are blended to

have one sound. That is the divine idea, to have no discord.

The Lord is producing this harmony in the hearts of the saints now. It is all gathered up in the twenty-four elders. They are a kingdom, and they are kings, they have crowns ; they are priests with their white raiment, their vials full of incense and they have harps. The Lord is still making, and these are just a few suggestions of His present work. He would make us submissive to Him, that we should see something of the greatness of it, and to be in His hand that He should make us kings and priests.

Satan has not ceased in his work in making a kingdom of darkness. He always imitates, and in that way deceives men. His kings are the "rulers of the darkness of this world," and he himself is a king. It says, "They have a king over them, the angel of the abyss : his name in Hebrew Abaddon, and in Greek he has for name Apollyon," that is Destroyer, Rev. 9:11. He also is an anti-priest, the accuser of the brethren, and he has a system of anti-priests. Thus he is in contrast to our great High Priest who intercedes for us. He also has his instruments of music to carry out his purposes, as Nebuchadnezzar said, "at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, pipe, lute, sambuca, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music," ye shall "fall down and worship the image that I have made." Satan is forming vessels, in-

struments of satanic music to woo the hearts of men and women to the system of worship he has set up to the destruction of mankind.

I appeal to the young people to remember that there are these two systems. In the one there is what the Lord Jesus is doing from on high by His Spirit, making His kingdom, His priests, His instruments of music; and in the other there is Satan with his kingdom, subverting the hearts of men who are willing to obey him. It is a very solemn matter for us all to consider to which kingdom we are lending ourselves, for everyone is being formed in one kingdom or the other. Soon the dividing line will come, for all that the Lord has made will be removed and brought into display in another world when He comes "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." The time will come when He will be admired, and that which has been formed on the opposite side will go out into the blackness of darkness for ever. One desires that we might take account of the present moment, for it is of great importance, when little by little we are being formed by the Lord. May He help us to take account of these things, and to be in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter, that our own wills may be judged, and that He may form us as He will for His praise.

## IS THY HEART RIGHT ?

2 KINGS 10 : 15-27 ; HOSEA 2 : 14-23

ONE feels, dear brethren, that the question that was raised by Jehu, is a very appropriate one for each one of us at this time. He said to Jehonadab as he met him, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart ?" It is a question for us, and doubly important to-day for two reasons. One is the *marked increase* in the world of idolatry. Idolatry is sweeping christendom like a plague, it is sweeping through every land, so that the Lord says to each one of us, "Is thy heart right ?" Not, Are your words right ? Not, Is your doctrine right ? Not, Is your ground of gathering right ? All these things are of great importance, but there is something more important. "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart ?" Jehu says as it were, As far as my heart is concerned towards you, that is right ; there is no question about that ; but is thy heart right, as my heart is right with thy heart ? Is the same kind of heart with you that is in me towards you ? There is surely no one but would grant unequivocally that the heart of Christ towards His own is right ! Never was it more manifest than to-day ; the faithful,

constant, devoted, unremitting love of Christ for His assembly, and for each one of us. His heart is right, there is no question about that, but I think it is time everyone of us answered this question, "Is thy heart right?"

That is what Jehu wanted to know because he had a great mission before him; he had a great work to do and he wanted a companion, a support; he wanted fellowship in this great work, and he wanted a man whose heart was right. Just like in the early chapters of the Acts, the eleven apostles were conscious that a great mission was committed to them. They desired to complete the twelve for the service on hand, and they pray and virtually say, Lord we want a man whose heart is right. "Lord, knower of the hearts of all." We do not want another Judas; he looked right, he seemed to consider the poor, he accompanied the Lord, he went up to the house of God with Him; but they say, we do not want another Judas—an idolater. We want a man whose heart is right, and they say, "Lord, knower of the hearts of all, shew which one of these two thou hast chosen." Jehonadab faces this question; he looks it right in the face. What is my heart like? I can see the line Jehu is on; I can see the state of his heart by the line he is on, and by his ways; but what is my heart like? He says in all integrity, My heart is right in this matter. Jehu says, "If it be, give me thy

hand.—And he gave him his hand.” The bond of fellowship was established between Jehu and Jehonadab in the matter that lay before them. With the confession that Jehonadab’s heart was right he took him up into his chariot, and they went together to accomplish the absolute destruction of Baal. They are determined not to leave one, not a priest, not a servant, not an image of Baal. That is what is in Jehu’s heart ; he determines not to leave one of the servants of Baal on the earth, and Jehonadab says, I am with you. They went right into the house of Baal and together accomplished the destruction of Baal. Are we with the Lord in His intention to destroy idolatry ? I am sure that is what the Lord is seeking to do by the ministry that is coming to us ; that every phase of idolatry should be destroyed and the heart of His people be right. When the Spirit and the bride say “Come,” the heart of the assembly is right, there is no one usurping the Lord’s place in the bride’s heart. That is the second reason why we should face this question. The first is that the Lord is bent on the destruction of idolatry, and the second reason is that *He is coming*, and He wants the hearts of His own right. He wants the absolute place there.

I wanted to pursue that in the book of Hosea ; the removal of every trace of Baal and the establishment in the heart of God’s people of His own proper place. The Lord indicated in Hosea that

He is not prepared to be called Baali—He is not prepared to accept that name—He resents it—He hates it. Christendom is full of the name Baali in respect of Christ—full of it, but the Lord says, you shall no more call me Baali. He says, “I will take away the names of the Baals out of her mouth.” That is what He wants to do, to take these hateful names out of our mouths and replace them with that wonderful name “Ishi.” In that day He says, you shall call me Ishi—not Baali. Ishi means “my husband.” He is not prepared for His own to call Him Baali. He will not be one of the Baalim. The Lord Jesus in christendom is just one of the Baalim, one of the many lords. It is true that christendom speaks of the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirty-six, but in the minds of men in christendom there are many other lords. What the Lord wants from each one of those who really love Him, is “Ishi,” “my husband”—literally “my man.” That is the name He wants and He loves. A woman’s husband is not *one* of her lords—he is her only lord. Sarah called Abraham “lord”—he was not one of them. No true Christian contemplates having a rival to Christ. The blessed Lord is great enough to fill every human heart, great enough to be the only lover of every Christian, to absorb the whole of their affections. The apostle Paul speaks of our being “married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.”

Let me ask each believer, Are you married to Him ? Do you say to Jesus "Ishi" ? That is, "my husband," the Man that fills your heart. Does money have great power over me ? Does evil dominate me in any form ?—the love of prominence ? Then I have many masters. That is Baalim, which the Lord hates, and He would take you out from under the domination of every one of them. He would lead your heart to say to Him, "Ishi"—"my husband"—the object of my heart—the Man that fills my soul—the One for whom I live—the One who supports me—the One who makes me fruitful to God ; that we might be "married to another, . . . that we should bring forth fruit unto God." That is what the Lord is seeking.

The woman of Luke 7, who came out from the city, was living there under a Baal—the Baal of the multitude in the city. She was dominated by what went on in the city with all its lawlessness, but the Lord Jesus allured her ; He drew her heart out of that city into the wilderness. If ever there was a wilderness, it was in Simon the Pharisee's house—no one naturally would go into that house, where they would be scorned, but the blessed Saviour allured her, and in her actions she says to Him "Ishi," she says: He is the object of my heart. The Lord says "this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet, . . . she loved much." The Lord secured a lover, one of the thousands of them that love Him. No other lords

would have dominion over her now, she had found the object of her heart.

There is another time this thought of marriage to Christ appears ; it is in John 4. The woman of Samaria had her Baalim ; she had had five of them, indeed, she had had six. The last one Baal-Peor, which means uncleanness, the lord of uncleanness—she was controlled by him. How are we to be saved from the power of lust as in this world? By finding a Husband. Jesus said to this woman, “Give me to drink,” and by His precious grace He drew her heart out to Himself. He spoke to her heart. He allured her out from the dominion of Baal-Peor and every other Baal until He got her heart, and she went away and said to the men of the city, “Come, see a man”—the Man of my heart ; I have finished with all others, I have found a Man that satisfies me for ever. “Come, see a man.” He is the Man.

So it was with Mary Magdalene. What a domination she had been under—seven demons ! But the Lord brought the holy, blessed, glorious delivering influence of heaven to Mary Magdalene and allured her out of the captivity, so much so that according to the gospel of Luke the demons *went* out. In Matthew they were *cast* out, but in Luke they *went* out by the alluring of Jesus, as He became supreme to her heart. There is no room for other authority in a heart that loves Christ. So Mary followed Him and ministered to Him of her

substance—the Man that filled her heart and soul.

Then there is Zacchæus. You say he is a good man, but he has a Baal. He was a little man and he climbed up a tree ; that is what all little people do unless the Lord helps them to judge it, and we are all little. How small we are the Lord knows ; the desire to be prominent is in every heart—it is one of the Baals, and that element was in Zacchæus. He loved the Lord and wanted to follow Him, but there was this Baal of prominence, and the Lord would not have that. He says I want you to leave that behind for ever, “*make haste and come DOWN.*” So it was with the dying robber. How many Baals held him during his life I do not know, but he is allured by the attractiveness of Jesus, until he says to Jesus, ere he departs, “Ishi”—“this man”—the Man I love, the Man whose authority I own and accept for eternity ; I want to come into His kingdom, He is the Man who draws me away from all the Baals ; He turns to Jesus and speaks of Him as “this man”—that is what the Lord is seeking to do with us, to allure us into the wilderness and speak to our hearts, that we may never look upon Him as one of the lords, but as supreme.

The apostle Paul speaks of the last days in 2 Timothy, and says, men will be lovers of themselves. That is a Baal—one of the mighty Baals—self-love, men living to gratify themselves, living with self as the dominating power of human life.

Is it not so, and how much do we contribute to it ? Let every heart examine itself—Is my heart right ? Am I living selfishly, is self enthroned in my heart ? “Is thy heart right ? ” “Lovers of themselves” is one of the great features of the last days ; it is written over everything to-day—the innate selfishness of every class. Selfishness is written over the whole of mankind, more than ever in history, and christendom is the worst of all. The Lord says to us, “Is thy heart right ? ” Is self the object of our lives. Paul could say, “the love of Christ constraineth us.” He is such a blessed Person to my heart, says Paul, that “we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.” This is the point I have reached. “In the last days . . . men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures.” This is another tremendous Baal, holding men’s hearts, leading them to give up what is right in the sight of God ; even Christians abandoning the fellowship and dishonouring the holy name of Christ by this mighty Baal clutching their souls.

The Lord says to us, “Is thy heart right ? ” Paul says, “these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Do not let us ignore this terrible Baal, “pleasures,” that would seize our time ; it is one of the greatest of the modern idols ; thousands are sacrificing themselves at this altar—“lovers of pleasures

more than lovers of God." The Lord says, "Is thy heart right ?" When we have an hour or a day free from our proper responsibilities, who is controlling that ? Do not try and evade it by saying we need a certain amount of physical exercise, there is plenty to be had under the control of Christ. What will save us ? The thought of the *Husband*, the only occupier of the heart. That is what the Lord is seeking. What is true in the mind of God is true for all, that we are married to Christ. We are liberated from all the Baals, and "married to another . . . that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

The apostle said to the assembly in Corinth, "I have espoused you unto one man." The assembly at Corinth was espoused to Christ. No Baals were to be in Corinth, no one lording over God's heritage, no desire for prominence, but Christ supreme. That is the local position. It solves every problem, if we only accept it ; that the assembly in every setting is espoused to one Man. He is to be supreme there ; if anyone serves the saints it is only for Jesus' sake. "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Local troubles would soon be solved if Christ were supreme. The idea that we shall have anything remarkable when things are wrong with us individually is impossible. Things begin in the individual soul, and then the full thought is seen in the local assembly. The assembly is espoused to one Man ; that is to be seen locally. There is no

Baal provided for in the local assembly. Paul says, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, . . . that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things," Eph. 5:25-27. When the day comes for the marriage it says, "his wife has made herself ready," He is Ishi to the assembly's heart; there will be no Baalim in eternity; there will be this one blessed Man engaging the heart of the assembly for ever.

Now I want to say a word or two about what the Lord says He will do for such. "I will make a covenant for them in that day with the beasts of the field, and with the fowl of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground." I think that is a remarkable covenant. What a promise, dear brethren. The devouring influences of the lion, the cruel rending influences of the bear, the scattering influences of the wolf, the defiling influences of the leopard—all under divine control for our blessing. God says, "I will make a covenant for them in that day with the beasts of the field," and the end in view is that God's people shall "lie down safely." This covenant takes in also "the fowl of the heavens and the creeping things." These unclean birds of the air no man can deal with or restrain. *Christian Science*, *Spiritism*, *Pentecostalism*, *Millennial-dawnism*, and *Modernism* itself are fowls of the air, under the control of

Satan, "the prince of the power of the air," who is spreading these influences throughout christendom. They may go on with their work in apostate christendom, but God will preserve those who go on with the truth. Then the creeping things. God speaks in His word of the caterpillars, and locusts ; they destroy every green thing ; little things outside the range of human possibility to control ; they can sweep through a land and take every element of verdure out of it in a night. That is what is coming, and the greenness of everything in christendom is disappearing through such influences. What will not the Lord do for His own in any part of the world and in every local company, if, as He looks down upon us, He sees in our hearts the right recognition of Himself as supreme ? He will grant that a conscious, living present sense of His love will fill every heart. That is what He is leading up to before the rapture ; that is what the Lord is after, that not one of the Baalim should be in our mouths. The apostle would not have a Baal. Some of the Corinthians were saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is the Christ divided ? has Paul been crucified for you ?" Christ is not to be displaced by others or to share His place with them. He is to be supreme. That is the position, dear brethren, for every one of us and for the assemblies. He will be as Husband to us, He will be everything to us, and He covenants to protect

those who accord Him that place. How He protected those who gave Him this supreme place when He was here. As the disciples complained about the woman in the house of Simon the leper, the Lord said, "Why trouble ye the woman?" Again, Judas said of Mary of Bethany, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Jesus said, "Let her alone." So it always is, dear brethren, if He sees that He has our hearts, He will not let anything touch us. There are certain believers who while they love Him, have reserves in their hearts, and the Lord is only one of their lovers. Sport may be loved, or fame, or money. All these are rivals to Jesus.

Is not our blessed Saviour, the Son of God worthy to be supreme in every heart? To the local assemblies that He bears upon His heart, should He not be as a Husband, having their undivided love even as of each heart individually?

May the Lord help us on this road—the road of blessing and joy and protection—as the break up in christendom proceeds, through the apostasy.

## BEAUTY

SONG OF SONGS 5:9-16; GENESIS 37:1-3;  
ISAIAH 52:1

I WANT to say a few words as to beauty. A person would have to be blind to be ignorant of the fact that beauty marks all the works of God. The scripture says that He has made everything beautiful in its time, Eccles. 3:11. He knows how long a thing is to last, and if its time is an hour, a day, a week, a few years, or eternity—He has made everything beautiful in its time. Apart from the power and the height and the ordinances, how beautiful are the heavens! We read, "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens," Job 26:13. David says, "When I consider thy heavens," and what a spectacle the heavens present on a clear night! God intends us to look at them and to consider them. David says, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," Psa. 8:3. Some of the stars are blue, some red, and some golden when seen more clearly than with the naked eye. They are gems set in the heavens in evidence of God's regard for beauty. Then what beauty there is on earth!—Whose hand has ordered it all? Think of the majesty of the mountains, the beauty of the

valleys, the charm of the ever-flowing streams, and the verdant foliage that God has made. Can we question His delight in the beauty of His handiwork? The Lord said, "Consider the lilies, . . . how they grow." Why should God put into a flower such amazing beauty? Take the insects; especially in tropical countries, there is beauty in the butterflies that baffles mankind, and no one can imitate it. Think of the tropical sea, where the sun's power is mighty; there are fish there radiant with such blendings of colour that it is almost unbelievable, but it is the work of God. If God has done thus with that which is but for time, what must be the beauty of that which will last for ever? God is forming beauty now that will last for eternity. He has finished the material worlds, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." They have never been added to or altered, for they are God's handiwork, and He is still working, as the Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John 5:17. This great work has been going on for nearly six thousand years.

All the beauty that will be seen in the new heavens and the new earth is concentrated in the Person of Jesus. The beauty with which God will garnish the spiritual heavens, that which will yet be seen in every heavenly family, as well as that which will be seen only on the earth, was

all concentrated in the Person of Jesus in manhood. God is wonderful in His ability to concentrate, it is part of His divine glory to do so. He says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise," Prov. 6:6. Think of what God has concentrated in the ant, so tiny an insect, yet possessing profound wisdom, so that she knows she must gather her food in summer, and store it up in places she provides for herself, and keep it there for the winter. So in His wisdom God has concentrated in the Person of Jesus in manhood *all* the beauties of the new heaven and the new earth.

What is so amazing, and what should challenge every heart is, that when all this beauty came down to earth in the Person of Jesus, the language of the world, and of the religious part too, was "there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isa. 53:2. Is this what you would say, dear friend? The truth is that all the beauty of heaven and of earth is in Jesus. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." The King in His beauty is Jesus—"another king, one Jesus," Acts 17:7. This King opens the eyes of men to see His beauty, blessed be His name. That is what the blind beggar wanted when he said, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." "Lord, that I might see," and he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. He glorified God because he saw the King, and everyone does so who sees Him, because they

have seen the beauty with which God will fill eternity.

I do not know that I can touch much on this scripture in the Song of Songs, but it came before me as a description, from the heart of the bride, of features of beauty that she knows to be in the bridegroom. This is what she is able to say about Christ when she is challenged: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?" The previous part is full of the greatest instruction: they say, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" And she answers, "if ye find my beloved"—she has lost touch with Him. Has anyone here lost touch with Him? She says, If ye find him . . .; and she cannot finish the sentence because of the depth of her feeling. Is He more than another beloved to us? With whom can you compare Him? Think of the various objects that engage the human heart, but what are they compared with Christ? He is more than another beloved, He is more than any other object could be, and in this connection He is not prepared to be merely first, any more than He will be second—He must be *all*, One alone. When the heart says, "my beloved," there is no idea of anyone else. With many Christians He is One of many, alas, all dividing the heart with Him, but this bride says of Him that "he is altogether lovely," "the chiefest

among ten thousand." He is the only One to her heart now, whatever has been her experience before.

We will look at her description of Him as bringing before us what beauty is and where it is. In verse 10 it says "My beloved is white." That could not be said of any other man, that he is inherently white. If we are white individually it is because we have been washed, by "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins." We were not white naturally, but covered with stains. "My beloved is white," He was "that holy thing" from the outset. "My beloved is white and ruddy." If we are now ruddy it is as having been healed, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases," Psa. 103 : 3. Each of us has needed a physician, but the Lord had no need of one, for no trace of the moral diseases and sicknesses that assail mankind ever touched Him. He was ruddy, without any trace of disease, He is inherently vigorous.

"His head is as the most fine gold." The head is the seat of intelligence, and the bride is distinguishing His head from His eyes and cheeks and mouth. There are in His holy and blessed mind, thoughts that are in keeping with the finest gold, thoughts that are more precious than tongue can tell, the very thoughts of God. The Psalmist says, "How precious . . . are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them,"

Psa. 139 : 17. All these thoughts were in the mind of Jesus, every one of them expressing the perfection of divine love. So she says "His head is as the finest gold."

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." She looks at His hair and she says there is no evidence of age nor of decline, and to all eternity there never will be. "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set." Think of a blessed Man like that ! The dove can never rest where there is uncleanness, and the eyes of Jesus are as doves' eyes by the rivers of waters, always watching the movements of the Spirit of God, and His eyes in accord with them. In His compassion, of course, He may look upon a poor sinner, but He cannot look upon sin or upon what is unholy, for He is God. How often sorrow comes, especially with young believers, because their eyes have been allowed to rest upon unholy sights. What we need is to follow Him, and as passing through this corrupt scene, we need to be blind to evil and not to look in certain directions. The window of the ark was above ; from that the dove went out and came back ; there was no window in the side of the ark. It was not contemplated that Noah and his family should be watching the corruption outside, so the window was above, and our eyes should be "Looking unto Jesus."

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet

flowers : his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." I cannot say much about His cheeks, I suppose they are connected more with the countenance, and the countenance of Jesus was lovely ; indeed it is like a bed of sweet-smelling flowers, giving out a fragrance that would draw every heart to kiss Him. "Thou gavest me no kiss," He said to the Pharisee, but the woman kissed His feet and the Lord valued that.

"His lips . . . dropping sweet smelling myrrh." Every word from the lips of Jesus was fragrant with sweet-smelling myrrh. When He spoke, He conveyed to His hearers the intensity of His suffering love. When He said to the leper "I will," in that word was the sweet-smelling myrrh that would take upon Himself what was upon the leper, the suffering love that would identify Himself with him. And so with all His words, as they dropped from His blessed lips.

"His hands are as gold rings, set with the beryl." His hands remind us of what He does, and they captivate us, they are as rings that hold us firmly ; set with chrysolite, a golden stone that brings before us what is of God. The Lord won many a heart here with His hands, for what He did held them in the grip of His love.

"His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." How different Jesus is from everyone else ! How little there is in this world that will stand examination as to what is inward and hidden,

and that any dare to examine closely! There would be found a sink of corruption. All may be fair outwardly, but inwardly the Lord says, they are "full of dead men's bones." When you come to Jesus, you see what is incorruptible, both inward and outward. Time can never effect deterioration in that blessed Man. You can look at Jesus and see nothing but beauty; being overlaid with sapphire signifies that He is adorned inwardly. Inward beauty is what is of value, but there is much vaneer in the world to-day.

In 2 Timothy 3 there is a description of what characterises the world to-day. It says in the last days men shall be lovers of themselves; deeply rooted selfishness in their hearts, lovers of money and of pleasure, having no love for what is good, unthankful, unholy, truce-breakers, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. This is a perfect description of christendom; and we need to take heed that it does not describe some of us, and that our Christianity is not merely an outward form that covers an awful inward state. As you look at Jesus inwardly you say, "His belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphire."

"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." This implies the superiority and grandeur of the movements of Jesus as He walked. John the baptist was entranced with the beauty of the movements of Jesus; his heart was lifted outside his surroundings when ceasing

for the moment from his own service, he looked upon Jesus as He walked, watching the legs of marble set in sockets of finest gold. That is why the woman in Simon's house never ceased kissing His feet. She had been following Him and watching His movements, and the Lord said, Since the time I came in she hath not ceased to kiss My feet.

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." Lebanon is marked by being the highest point in God's land, and thus very near heaven. It is where the cedar trees grew that were used in the building of the temple. Solomon said, "Send me also cedar-trees, cypress-trees, and sandal-wood trees, out of Lebanon," 2 Chron. 2 : 8. Such trees can only be obtained from Lebanon, and they represent men who live near heaven in communion with God.

"His mouth is most sweet : yea, he is altogether lovely." The bride distinguishes between His lips and His mouth. His lips refer to what He says, but in relation to His mouth she says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." He is holding her heart and bringing her in touch with Himself in that intimate way. She does not proceed with other members of His body, but she sums all up in that word "he is altogether lovely." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." This is the Object of my heart, for whom I live, whose presence I love, the One to whom I tell my secrets, my Friend. The Lord said "I have called you

friends," because He told them His secrets, so the bride says, "this is my friend." It is not here, I am His friend, but that He is my friend. I have not one secret that I withhold from Him. Is that so with us? Do we tell Him our secrets? All beauty is in Him, He is the King in His beauty.

In Genesis 37 beauty is not immediately connected with Joseph personally but with his coat, which is a very important matter. The Song of Solomon describes the Beloved as white, "My beloved is white." That is important, but Jacob made for Joseph a coat of many colours. The Spirit of God leaves us to find out how many there were, it just says "many." There are only a certain number of primary colours, but God loves to blend colours. Joseph's coat was a witness to the love that Jacob had for him, and Joseph went into the field wearing his coat and seeking his brethren. This speaks of the Lord Jesus here seeking men, and beauty is seen in the garment of Jesus. He had only one "coat" and He exhorts His followers to have only one. Joseph wore his coat out in the field, as he moved about amongst those who hated him. The Lord appeared in His beautiful garment, the basis of which was white linen, so white that "no fuller on earth" could whiten it. Set in the fabric there was also blue, the colour of heaven—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's will pervades heaven, and it also pervaded every movement of Jesus.

Then the purple. He was King when He was here, and the kingly colour was always to be seen. It is to be seen now in suffering; those who wear purple are sufferers at the present time.

The apostle says if we suffer we shall also reign. At Nazareth He suffered contempt and scorn, but He is the King there, and how the purple adorns the suffering One on the cross! Even the robber sees it, and would fain come into the kingdom of this blessed One who is King. Then, wherever Jesus went, the scarlet was seen. He did not seek publicity, as we all love to do naturally, but He could not be hid. The centurion said, "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," and Jesus marvelled that he had detected the scarlet. Amber, the colour of glowing brass, is typical of holiness, and every action of Jesus was in accord with the brass, as perfectly holy in word and deed. Green denotes that every action was marked by freshness and living power, even when on the cross. "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The idea of a garment is that in which we are seen by men, and thus the Lord went through this world seeking His brethren, and wearing the coat of many colours, representing that which is beautiful in a garment.

As to Isaiah 52, the prophet says it is time to wake up. Of course, literally, it refers to Israel, but I would apply it to us. "Awake, awake ;

put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." The time has come for God's people to be beautifully clothed, many have been dilatory as to this long enough. In the passage in the Song of Songs, the bride says, "I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it on ?" Who told her to put it off ? The Lord Jesus had only the one, but He did not put it off. It was taken away by wicked hands and they cast lots for it. The church should not put off her beautiful garments. The bride was not ready when the bridegroom called because she had put off her coat, but the word now is to put it on. This is what the Lord has been doing these hundred years, He has been waking up the church to put on her beautiful garments so that she will be suitably clothed when He comes. The way they are put on is by making room for the word of the Spirit of God, for He is the One who clothes us in beautiful garments. The holy Spirit will always bring into evidence the features of Christ in the saints if we make room for Him, for He is the *Holy Spirit* and holiness is one feature of the beautiful garments. He is the Spirit of God and He will bring into evidence what is in keeping with God. He is the Spirit of Jesus, and He will bring the features of that lowly blessed Man into evidence ; He is the Spirit of Christ and will bring the features of the anointing into evidence ; He is the Spirit of the Lord and will give us to be in power ;

He is the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts, and thus He brings us into the liberty of sonship. Then also He would grant us to have the Spirit of grace, of supplication, of judgment and of wisdom, all features which enter into the beautiful garments for the daughter of Zion.

Thus as we make room for the Spirit of God, the beautiful garments are seen upon His people and the word to us is to awake and to come into this. The Lord desires that His people should be suitably clothed to greet Him when He comes, in accordance with the coat of many colours. The word is to put them on, and we do so by making room for the movements of the Spirit and for Christ in our hearts, and we shall thus be delivered from the false beauty of Babylon, which is soon to terminate.

Satan has built up a vast system of external beauty to gratify himself. He was perfect in beauty when he was made, but he corrupted his beauty, and he has built up a great city marked by corrupted beauty. In it also there is gold, silver, precious stones, blue, purple, and scarlet, but it is all coming under the judgment of God, and it is only as we have part in true beauty that we shall be delivered from what is false. May the Lord help us to make room for these features of beauty, for it is evident that nothing can be suitable to God which is not truly beautiful.

## VALLEYS

1 SAMUEL 17:1-3; 1 CHRONICLES 18:12; PSALM 23:1-6

It is evident that in a very good land, of which Scripture speaks, mountains and valleys are essential. In fact the two are required, together with springs and rivers, for fruitfulness. I would like to say a word about these three valleys. The valley of Achor is the door of hope, and if we pass through that door, there is a wonderful hope for the present time. There is the hope that the end of the assembly's history will correspond with the beginning. At the beginning, Christ was everything. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own," Acts 4:32. Christ was everything to them, and every one of us will come to that if we go through that door of hope, and that is through the valley of trouble. There are wonderful mountains in God's land. That great mountain, mount Zion, is there. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," Psa. 48:2. That is in God's land, and we love to go to it. Then there is the mountain of Lebanon towering up towards heaven, where the cedars, the firs, and other woods grow for God's temple. The mount of Olives is there, covered with trees that represent spiritual persons. "The holy

mount” is there where Christ’s face shone as the sun, where the cloud was, and the voice out of the cloud. All these mountains are in that very good land which the spies searched, but there are also many valleys there. If we are to be fertile, we must have to do with the valleys as well as the mountains. I think we all like the mountains, not that one would discredit them, of course, but fertility is in the valleys. It is remarkable how many valleys are connected with judgment—scenes of judgment. We must come into these valleys if we are to be fertile. The valley of Elah, in the first passage I read, is one of these valleys. What is seen in this valley is a giant of immense stature without a head, his forehead has been pierced by a stone from the brook and his head taken to Jerusalem. We must visit that valley if we are to be fertile. The oaks grow there, it implies a valley of oaks; Elah means “oaks,” and if we grow there we shall be stable. This giant has been overcome and his head removed. The Philistines represent man with his natural instincts operating in the things of God. If we let our minds operate in divine things, then we are Philistines, but if we go through this valley in our own experience, then we shall be stable and shall be preserved from the natural mind, which is enmity against God. The valley of Elah is where fertility and stability are known, and where there is complete judgment of the Philistine mind.

David slung his stone into the giant's forehead. That is where the trouble lay, not in his heart but in his forehead, and when he drew the giant's sword he cut off his head and took it to Jerusalem. Goliath lay there as a witness to the judgment of God against the mind of man operating in divine things. The seeds of that are abroad corrupting every part of christendom, it is like a plague spreading. The gain of going down into this valley is to see Goliath with all his stature, implying human greatness, without any evidence of intelligence left—his head gone.

The next passage is the valley of salt. Salt is referred to many times in the Scriptures. This is a valley of salt, and is another place where judgment is exercised, for the Edomites are slain here. It is generally connected with the valley of the Edomites. Edom is Esau. Edom means "red," he represents the first man, as Esau, ever seeking to be conspicuous according to the flesh. There is not a man, woman, or child on the earth who does not want to be conspicuous. It is natural to the human heart, but if we go to the valley of salt we shall see that the Edomite is overthrown. Salt represents the great preservative element that is found amongst God's people by accepting the judgment of God. The Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife," Luke 17:32, that is the pillar of salt, remember God's holy judgment. The preservative is in that pillar. If our hearts

are in Sodom, if we give place to that which is of Edom, God is outside of it all. The valley of salt is the judgment of God on the first man. I think I am right in saying, that in every battle in that valley God's people were victorious. They went down in the sense of God's judgment against sin and against the features of the first man. God is always with us if we are in that valley. We conquer in the light of the holy judgment of God. That is the great preservative in one's soul.

In the last passage I read we get "the valley of the shadow of death." I believe that tends to fertility in the soul. When we go down into that valley, we go down in our souls in the recognition that the shadow of death is on everything there. No one knows how near death is actually, but the shadow is on everything. Death casts its shadow on everything on the earth. It rests on every relationship—husbands, wives, children, homes, businesses. Everything here on the earth is under the shadow of death. The more we go into that valley and explore it, the more fertile we become. Not that you would discredit relationships and the homes of the saints, but they will not remain. Not that you are to be unfaithful in your occupation, but it will not remain; not that you are to be careless with money that you are entrusted with, but it will not remain. We hold everything here in the light of the fact that it will not endure. No one was more fruitful than

the apostle Paul. He said, "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal : but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. 4 : 18. He says in effect, I am going through this valley, I have my eye on things which are not seen and that will abide ; and he was more fruitful than anyone. Think of his offspring ! He says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers : for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel," 1 Cor. 4 : 15, and of Onesimus he says, "whom I have begotten in my bonds," Philem. 10. That man was maintained in every valley. He did not steal a Babylonish garment as Achan, nor did he covet any man's silver or gold. He was maintained in the refusal of human wisdom, and in accord with God's judgment as to Corinth. He says in effect, I have judged the matter, I have judged this matter as God judges it. Then his mind was ever on the fact that everything, the good as well as the bad, everything on this earth, is under the shadow of death. His eye was not on things which are seen, but on things unseen, which abide for eternity.

I just wanted to stress this. There are many other valleys. The result of going into the valleys is fertility. Balaam saw that when he said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread

forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters," Num. 24:5, 6. I am sure we all want to have part in the fertility at the present moment, in what is fruitful to God in the closing days of the dispensation. We know the valleys and we know the mountains, and many of the valleys relate to the activity of judgment on evil. May the Lord help us to visit these places more often in our souls.

## MEMORIALS

PSALM 56:8; NUMBERS 19:1-9; 2 CHRONICLES 5:7-9

IN speaking to you, one is conscious that one is speaking to lovers of Christ. The apostle Paul makes clear that when the Lord comes, those who do not love Him will be in a *very serious position*—a terrible position. He says, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha,” 1 Cor. 16:22—accursed at the coming of the Lord. Not now, thank God! We cannot say that anyone here, if he is not a lover of Christ, is now under a curse; but when the Lord comes he will be, if his heart has not been affected by our Lord Jesus Christ and by what has come out in Him to woo the heart of man. Then if the heart is untouched by that, the apostle’s judgment of the position is that such a one would come under the curse of God.

But in speaking to one’s brethren, one is conscious that every one of us loves Him, and as loving Him, I am sure we delight to think of Him as having completed His sufferings. Luke says that He appeared to them *after he suffered*; that is, the sufferings were ended, and He is known to His own after He suffered. The apostle Peter also

says that he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, "and the glories *after these*," 1 Pet. 1:11. The Lord Himself said, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" Luke 24:26. So that anyone who loves Christ delights in the thought that His sufferings are ended, and that the "glories after these" have begun. *They* are not ended, they are not completed, but they have begun. Peter says, "the glories," not "the glory," but "the glories"—the word is plural, and then he speaks of "the glories after these." Think of the glories that Christ already has entered into! Think of the glory of one Man out of death! Think of Jesus standing here and actually remaining on this earth for forty days entirely free from the power of death! No one else has had that glory. Great men of this world have never been one day, one moment out of death. They cannot take themselves out of death nor can anyone else, but think of the glory of one Man—Christ Jesus—who for forty days assembled with His own and was "seen of above five hundred brethren at once," 1 Cor. 15:6. A Man with this glory; He is the Firstborn from the dead! Then think of the glory that He already has in that He has "gone into heaven," 1 Pet. 3:22. Not only was He "carried up," Luke 24:51, but Peter says He "has gone into heaven," by His own right and His own power He has gone there. That is glory. Then think of

the *glory of His reception*, for it says He was "received up in glory," 1 Tim. 3 : 16. Heaven held a reception for Christ, it is not simply that He went there, but He was *received* in heaven. To receive persons implies that you welcome them, not simply that they open the door and come in, but reception suggests that you welcome them.

Thus the heavens have *received Him* in glory. Not in shame or in dishonour as He was here, but it says He was "received up in glory." Then He has received this glory after His sufferings, He has millions of lovers and He engages millions of hearts on the earth. No one else does that. A leader of this world cannot do it. There is but one blessed Man who for two thousand years has secured untold numbers of lovers—persons who are married to Him. That is what the apostle says in Romans, "that ye should be married to another," Rom. 7 : 4. No one has glory like that. The position of being married is that of a wife. She loves her children and she loves her parents, but in connection with the thought of a husband she loves him exclusively, and the Lord Jesus has won the exclusive love of millions of hearts as married to Him. Also He is the Head of the body—of the assembly, and that is part of His glory. He is soon coming in His glory—that is future—the glories are already His after the sufferings, but He is soon coming in glory, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory," Matt. 25 : 31. He will take

control of the whole world in His day of glory; but I do not wish to pursue that now. There is a vast range of glories after these that we could never exhaust—a vast range that follow the sufferings. As Peter says, “the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these,” but as to the sufferings of our Lord personally, they are over.

I want to say a few words as to what is connected with the sufferings that remain as a memorial, as a witness to the hearts of the saints, and which furnishes their worship with depth of feeling and holy response to Christ and to God. It is clear in Scripture that His sufferings are to remain before our hearts and minds as a witness of what He has been through. While the enduring of it is over for ever, I believe the memorial of His sufferings and of His pathway remains ever before the hearts of God’s people to maintain living responses to Christ and to God.

The first thing to which I would refer is the manna—“the hidden manna.” *That remains*—the Lord says, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” The Lord personally is not now in the wilderness; He has been in the wilderness, but the manna is stored up before God, for those to whom the Lord will give it. We shall not always need the manna, for we shall not always be in the wilderness; indeed, the wilderness journey is nearly over for the assembly, but the

manna will ever be available until the wilderness is completed. The whole memorial of the manna is preserved by God for us to feed upon, so that our hearts may be stimulated to respond to Himself. Manna means "what is it?" You remember it lay upon the face of the wilderness—an awful wilderness—it says, a "waste, howling wilderness"—the roar of its desolation came into every soul. No one could miss the howl of the dreary barren wilderness, and as they came out morning by morning "when the dew . . . was gone up" on the face of the wilderness there lay something. It says it was small and round and white, it tasted like wafers made with honey and like fresh oil. The people said, "What is it?" We can now answer that, for it typifies grace that came down in the coming of Jesus from heaven, down into the wilderness. It was so small, so accessible to everyone, it speaks of Jesus in His path from Bethlehem to Calvary; so sweet to the taste was the grace that came out in Him that it was like honey; so holy that it was like fresh oil—holiness in freshness and in life. *What is it?* O how little can we answer it! It was called "manna" because they had no name to give it. It refers to the pathway of Jesus through this wilderness, come as food for us as we are in the wilderness; but the memorial of it, when the path is over for Him, remains to speak to us of the lowly life of Jesus here in this wilderness, and is calculated to waken

to all eternity those movements of living praise and worship from our hearts, that are delightful to God.

In the same way I refer to the word in Psalm 56. The Psalmist is no doubt in the Spirit of Christ as he writes, and he refers to Christ. He says, "put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" The Lord Jesus will never weep again. When He has to do with the wilderness again, "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose," Isa. 35:1. He will never weep again, never a tear will fall from those holy eyes. God, as far as He is concerned, has wiped every tear from His eye, but Jesus has wept—holy tears have flowed from that blessed Person. He has gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed, Psa. 126:6. He has been into the night of tears, and every tear, speaking spiritually, every tear of Jesus is so precious to God that it has gone into His bottle. You will understand that I am speaking in connection with what is spiritual, and not material. Those tears did not fall into the ground. His tears could not be lost. The depth of sorrow and feeling that each tear represented was taken account of by God and those tears are in His bottle. They are the witness of the sorrows of Jesus in all their intensity, and they are in God's book, recorded there permanently. A book is something that can be seen and looked into, and remains as a record.

Scripture says, "in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." "In the days of his flesh"—not one day, nor two days, it was characteristic of His days. Think of His days, and every day contributing to those tears—"prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." As the Lord looked over Jerusalem, it says He wept over the city. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Matt. 23 : 37. The feelings of His heart were so moved that it says He wept over the city. Do you think those tears are lost ? As He looked at the havoc of death when at the grave of Lazarus, His own inward feelings were moved by the dread breaking up of affections by reason of death, and when He saw Mary and the Jews which were with her weeping, it says "Jesus wept," John 11 : 35. In the intensity of His feelings as to what death had done and was doing, He wept, and every tear, speaking spiritually, went into the bottle of God. They remain on record, having in view that there might be an answer in joy from those for whom He wept. What the Lord will feel when He sees another Jerusalem ! He wept over the Jerusalem that rejected Him and said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke 19 : 42. He will yet see another Jerusalem filled with them that

love Him, where the throne of the Lamb shall be established, where the Lamb is the light, where the gates are not shut by day and where there is no night, a city of which it will be said, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife . . . and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem," Rev. 21 : 9, 10. These tears in the bottle of God demand such an answer, none but this new Jerusalem could answer sufficiently to the tears that were shed over the Jerusalem that hated Him—"where also our Lord was crucified," Rev. 11 : 8. The tears at the grave of Lazarus demand that death should be abolished. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. 15 : 26, so, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying," Rev. 21 : 4. The answer to those sorrows of Christ demands that death should be annulled—not only as it is now for the believer, but finally dealt with. When we think of the tears of Jesus stored up by God, how it will enter into the eternal responses, the maintenance of living praise! In the golden pot there is the manna, in the bottle there are the tears, and the record of them in the book of God; these should surely move our hearts to praise and worship for ever.

I refer now to the blood of Jesus. In Psalm 49 we read, "the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up for ever." The price of the redemption of the soul is so costly, and what is

paid is given up for ever ; that is the blood of Jesus. The apostle says ye are redeemed not with silver and gold, "But with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. 1 : 19. That is the price of redemption, that life is in the blood—the blood of Christ ; the life which He took part in here on earth in flesh and blood. It says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" ; but He has laid down that life, never to resume it. He will never be in the life of flesh and blood again. He took life again in manhood, but not the life of flesh and blood. He was "put to death in flesh, but made alive in the Spirit," 1 Pet. 3 : 18. He says, "a spirit has not flesh and bones," Luke 24 : 39, but the life that is in the blood He has given up for our redemption, and He has given it up for ever, but it is not lost—its value remains. The blood of Christ, as speaking typically, is seen in the basins, which we read of in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and other passages. The blood of the sacrifices was poured into basins which were kept to receive the blood. The blood that was received into these basins on the day of atonement was taken into the holiest of all, into the presence of God. This speaks of the blood of Jesus, He "is not entered into the holy places made with hands . . . but into heaven itself," Heb. 9 : 24. In Hebrews 9 : 12 we read that He has entered there "by his own blood," that is "in the power of" or "in the virtue

of his own blood." He has thus gone into heaven ; into the presence of God. We have come to the blood of the sprinkling—a blood that has cleansing power. We read further of those who ". . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. 7 : 14. It is the same precious blood that gives "boldness to enter into the holiest"—the blood of Jesus, Heb. 10 : 19. That shows, dear brethren, that while the Lord has given up that life, the value of the blood is preserved before God. The Lord said when He instituted the supper, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." The cup is a vessel, that presents the "new covenant"—the love of God made known in Christ. The covenant is in all the value of that precious blood. The precious blood of Christ brings holy liberty to the soul, and the enjoyment of the eternal covenant. It is spoken of as "the blood of the eternal covenant" to remind us of the eternal bonds by which we are held by God, through the blood of Christ. Christ gave up His life to redeem us to God, as it says, "thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," Rev. 5 : 9.

Now I want to say a word about Numbers 19. We have the same thought there. This time it is the ashes. The ashes that are laid up in a clean place. What would an Israelite think as he looked on the ashes ? They are not lost or thrown to the four winds as the ashes of evil men are in these

days. The Spirit of God says they are to be laid up in a clean place, to be available, and are not to be destroyed. The red heifer was perfect, and without blemish, upon whom the yoke had never come. It had been burnt—those awful sufferings were over, never would it be burnt again. The thing was done and done for ever, *but the ashes were kept*. The red heifer is the figure of Christ as One who was perfect in the inwardness of His being. It speaks of the devotedness of His suffering love inwardly—what you cannot see outwardly, but it was there. He never came under yoke, never came under bondage to any. We may often appear to be free of bondage outwardly, but what are things like inwardly? The Lord speaks of some who are like “whited sepulchres,” Matt. 23 : 27. There are beautiful monuments of marble, and so forth, with lovely remembrances and verses on them, but what is inside? He says inwardly they are “full of dead men’s bones,” but that was not Jesus! Outwardly He was spotless, free from every yoke, the power of evil had never touched Him, and inwardly He was the same; secretly and inwardly He was what He was outwardly—that is the heifer. But it was such an One that went into the fire of the holy judgment of God against sin, and suffered outside the camp—outside the gate—outside the holy city, Jerusalem. In Numbers 19 the heifer was burnt until all that was left was the ashes, the evidence of the fire. That is a figure of

the sufferings of Christ at Calvary. Dear brethren, the fire of God's judgment came upon Him, but never to do so again. He is in the unclouded favour of God ; He has sat down with His Father in His throne, a place of infinite nearness, but He has been into the fire. The three hours of darkness and the forsaking were the fire. It is over now for ever, but the ashes are laid up in a clean place. As an Israelite looked on those ashes, so in a spiritual sense we are to be reminded of the judgment of God which was poured out in the forsaking of Calvary.

The Lord has passed through the judgment once for all, but the witness of what He suffered remains for us as the means of our being cleansed. We are reminded of what came upon Jesus that we might be cleansed. It is the divine process ; it is a symbol that is used for the purifying of God's people. As we touch a bone, a dead person, a grave, or as our vessels are left open we are defiled. Any vessel that is uncovered becomes unclean. We need to remember that at school, in business, or in having to do with men, if our vessels are left open we are bound to be defiled ; it is only a covered vessel that can be clean, and if we touch what is unclean with our eyes, or hands, or feet, however unintentionally, the element of defilement is in it all. But the application of the ashes by the power of the water suggests the Holy Spirit as available in a clean place to remind us of

Calvary, where all uncleanness was judged by One who personally was pure and spotless. Nevertheless the heifer was burnt—no more terrible figure of suffering than being burnt could be presented to the mind or heart. The fire is out, as far as Jesus is concerned, for ever, but the ashes are laid up for our cleansing as required.

Just a word or two about the staves. We have exactly the same thought in the staves of the ark. In the passage I read in 2 Chronicles 5 the ark had reached *its* place. It says, "the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah to its place." The wilderness was not its place. It was in the wilderness, but the wilderness was not its place. The Jordan—that mighty river—was not its place. It went into the Jordan, and it says as soon as the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the brim of the water, the waters went back, but the Jordan was not its place. The ark went round the city of Jericho for seven days, but that was not its place. It was carried round and it brought down the walls of that city, but that was not its place. How much less Dagon's temple into which it went! It was taken by the Philistines into the temple of Dagon, but that is not the ark's place. It destroyed Dagon and left only the stump, it also brought terrible judgment on the Philistines, but that is not the place of the ark. It came ultimately to the house of Obed-Edom, where holy hands and holy hearts delighted for three

months to provide for it a home, but that was not its place. David built a tent in the city of *David for it, where his rule was at its height, and where he could use all his power to protect it.* He had a tent there and put the ark into it, but that was not its place. It says they brought it into its place—into the oracle, the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim, into the holiest place of the universe, the holiest of all, where God's voice is heard.

Then it says they drew out the staves, and the wings of the cherubim are over the staves as well as over the ark. The staves, we read, are not seen without, but they are seen in the holy place, and then it says, "*there they are to this day.*" It refers to Christ—the Ark of God—the Ark of the covenant—the Ark of the testimony—the holy Ark—the blessed Vessel that contained the thoughts of God, and where God found His own delight. Christ is in His own place, not now in the wilderness, He has been in the wilderness; not now in the Jordan, He has been into death, but that is not His place now. He is not in conflict with enemies, He has been there; He is not now in the house of Dagon, He has been there. It says He "delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand," Psa. 78 : 61; but God has awaked and smitten His enemies and put them to perpetual reproach. He is not now in the house of Obed-Edom, but He has been there. It is not now

that godly, devoted hearts are treasuring that blessed Ark in their houses, but in the scene before us it is in its own place, even heaven itself, not holy places made with hands but heaven itself—in the holiest spot in the universe—in the presence of God, where God's voice is heard—the oracle, where the wings of the cherubim, all that is connected with divine government, is seen. Never could the power of evil touch it again; nevertheless the staves are there. What for? The journeyings are over; never will He journey again. Why the staves? The staves were to carry the ark on all its journeyings and it will never journey again. The position is fixed eternally. He is in His own place, but the staves are there to speak to us of the reality of His journeyings, to remind us that He has journeyed and that He has been all through the wilderness. He has risen up and faced the enemies, He has gone before us to search out the resting-place. He has been in the house of the Philistines; He has been loved by the Obed-Edoms; He has had His place in the tent—a provisional position, not a permanent one. He has accepted this and journeyed through all, but now He is in His own place; yet the staves are there to remind us of the journeyings of Christ. John tells us that "the temple of God was opened in heaven," Rev. 11:19. The Ark of His covenant was seen in His temple, but we are glad to be reminded of the journeyings of Jesus

in their varied character, "there they are to this day."

There is much more, but let us for a moment review these things. Manna stored up in the golden pot to remind us of the lowly descent of Jesus into the place of the wilderness, to be food for us there. The tears in God's bottle to remind us of His sorrows in the days of His flesh. The blood of Christ—the precious blood of Christ—a witness of the life that has been given up for ever, and whose efficacy abides to all eternity. The ashes laid up in a clean place, the memorial of the awful sufferings of Christ under the judgment of God, that we might be cleansed practically, and then the staves to tell of all His wonderful journeyings. He had followed them wherever they had been, He accepted whatever they had given, but the time came when the ark is in its place; and the staves are there to remind us of the holy and gracious journeyings of Jesus in every situation. Never, dear brethren, are these things to be forgotten. We sometimes mourn over the poverty of our worship and praise; it is because these things are not living to us, are not seen spiritually by us. You cannot see the manna without worshipping; you cannot see the bottle of tears without worshipping; you cannot see the blood without worshipping; you cannot see these ashes in a clean place without worshipping; you cannot see these blessed and wonderful staves of shittim

wood overlaid with gold under the wings of the cherubim, in the holiest of all, without worshipping.

We need that these things should be realities to us, that they may produce living praise from our hearts.

## THE WORK OF GOD

ROMANS 7:1-4; 12:1-6; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19, 20

I WOULD like to say a little more about the work of God. I am sure we must feel that God is working. If He is working it is of the greatest importance that we should consider His work. There is nothing in material things to compare with the work of God in creation. What could you put alongside a lily, a dove, or an ant? So it is with all the creation. We are exhorted to "Consider the work of God," Eccles. 7:13. And it says: "Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold," Job 36:24. God wants us to magnify the work that we can see—not that it could be greater than it is, we can never come to the end of its greatness. I do not think a scientist could ever fully understand a worm; it is the work of God. We are to magnify His work which men behold.

Now I want to speak about what God is doing spiritually, for God has finished the material creation. The heavens and the earth were finished, and nobody can improve them. God is still working, but His work now is connected with what is spiritual and what is invisible to the natural eye. The things that are not seen are eternal, but the

things that are seen are for a time and they will all disappear. The heavens and the earth will pass away; the elements will melt with fervent heat. But what is spiritual will abide, and that is what God has been occupied with these thousands of years. The Lord says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John 5:17, but that work is spiritual. I have read these three scriptures with that in view—God is doing three great things at the moment. He is forming His assembly—"the house of God, which is the church of the living God," 1 Tim. 3:15. Then He is forming the body of Christ, just as He built Eve. It says He "built" a woman. Then He is building His temple. Of course He is doing more than all this, for you could never come to the end of His work, but I want to speak of these three things: the assembly of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of God. These three things are being formed by divine workmanship. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all engaged in this great work, and it is not yet finished. The thing that matters is to be in it; our whole being should be set towards this great end.

I would like to show how each one of us comes into this. How do I come to form part of the assembly? How do I form part of the body of Christ? How do I form part of God's temple? These three great thoughts are universal. The assembly of God includes all believers from

Pentecost to the rapture. Every believer on earth is a member of the body of Christ. The whole assembly is to be the temple—"all the building . . . groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord," Eph. 2:21. In the epistle to the Corinthians we see that there was the assembly of God in Corinth, that God's people in one city are also viewed as His assembly. And the apostle says to the Corinthians: "*ye* are Christ's body," 1 Cor. 12:27—in that city He has His body. Then he says to them also that *they* are the temple of God, 1 Cor. 3:17. Think of what you have in thousands of cities patterned after the great universal thoughts—the assembly of God, the body of Christ, the temple of God! Could anything be greater than this in the town in which we live? This is worth living for—to be in this town in God's assembly, as a member of Christ's body and as forming part of God's temple. This is the work of God. How do I find my place in this?

Now I come back to the inquiry: How can I come into these three things? I believe that a similar process goes on in the individual soul, and in the assembly. The assembly is destined to be married to Christ. Christ "loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it," Eph. 5:25. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the assembly. The day is coming when it will be said "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready,"

Rev. 19:7. How do I find a part in all this? I come into it firstly by being to Christ myself. That is what the apostle says in Romans 7; he refers to what happens in each heart—"to be to another," Rom. 7:4. It means that Christ has such a place in our hearts, that He is as Husband to us; He is the object of our hearts; He is the One to whom we live. Now see how this comes about in the woman in John 4. The Lord appears to her—one blessed Man—the "one man" of Romans 5. He appears to her. He wins her heart, and He becomes *the* Man to her. She goes away and says to the men of the city: "Come, see a *man*"; He knows *all* about me, He knows everything I have done, but I love Him and I want you to love Him. He is so great a Person that He can be Husband to every heart, so that every heart should love Him and live to Him. That is how the thing begins: each heart learns to love Him, to be supported by His love, by His power, to know that what law could not do, what the world cannot do, what money cannot do, what nothing else can do, *this Man* can do. So we are married to Him that we might bring forth fruit for the pleasure of God. That is what goes on in one heart. Now there may be thirty brothers and sisters in a place, every one of whom loves Christ as a wife her husband, and is conscious of being supported by Him just as a wife is supported by her husband. Now when such come together the idea of the

assembly is realised. What meetings we should have if it were so. Every local assembly should know something of this. But it begins with each individual Christian being married to Christ. It says in Isaiah 4, "seven women shall take hold of one man." Christ is so great that all can take hold of Him ; every heart can find a Husband in Him. It is a reproach if we are not married ; these women in the prophecy said : "take away our reproach." If there are any not married to Christ, they are under reproach. When such a Man has come in—"the man Christ Jesus," who is Himself "over all, God blessed for ever"—when such a One has become a Man, if we are not married to Him, we are under very great reproach. Those seven women who take hold of one man, say, ". . . let us be called by *thy name*" ; a Christian is one who is called by "*thy name*" ; he is married to Christ. Now that is how we touch the assembly, for the idea of an assembly necessarily includes others. Every one in God's assembly is a lover of Christ, every one is married to Him ; that is how the assembly is formed in order to be united to Christ. How little practically we really contribute to the assembly !—and the Lord wants more from us.

I pass on now to the thought of the body of Christ. You must have many members to constitute a body. A hand is not a body, an ear is not a body. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ?" To have a body you

must have many members all united together into one—such is the body of Christ. The body is for Christ to express Himself. That is what our bodies are for—for the expression of ourselves. How could we know one another if we had no bodies? What a man is finds expression in his body. God is forming the body of Christ in which Christ is to be expressed universally on the one hand, and locally on the other. Think of a company of believers being in this place in which Christ can express Himself! Think of such a company throughout this earth in which this is possible anywhere; a company made up of myriads of believers, most of them inconspicuous, but all united in the one great function of expressing Christ!

Now how can I have part in this? This is another great matter that should be kept before us. How do I find my place in the body of Christ? We are brought into it as having the Holy Spirit—"in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body," 1 Cor. 12:13. But how can I function, how can I fill my part in the body? That is what every member should be concerned about. The ear is always working for the body; the eye is ever occupied for the body; the hand is ever working for the body, the feet in the same way ever moving for the body. No member acts for itself—such a thing could not be in the body. How do I function in this? Well, I have a body;

that is how it is worked out, and where it begins as far as I am concerned. I must learn what to do with my body before I can function as part of the body of Christ practically. In Romans 12, after speaking of our bodies, the apostle immediately begins to speak about one body; he says "we, being many, are one body in Christ." His mind travels from our own bodies individually to one body in Christ. So my part in the body of Christ is worked out in connection with my own body. The thing is so great to the apostle Paul that he says, "I beseech you . . . brethren"; he entreats the saints to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service." It is the only intelligent thing we can do, to hand our bodies over to God, but it will cost something—it is a living sacrifice and a continuous sacrifice. Sacrifice means that it costs us something, but it is acceptable to God.

Now it is a question of our "*bodies*." The body is the whole vessel. Some of us think that as to our ears, we will be careful to what we listen. Others as to their lips, they will be very careful about what they say. Other are more concerned about their hands, that they should do nothing that would dishonour the Lord. Others are more concerned about their feet, that they do not go where the Lord is dishonoured. All that is very good, but the word is: *the body*, that is the whole vessel, every part of us—eyes, lips, hands, feet—

the whole vessel is presented to God and He accepts it. Think of thirty persons here doing that! Would they not function as the body of Christ? Would not Christ be expressed in these thirty persons whose bodies are handed over to God, holy and acceptable? You would have the body of Christ in principle in this place, in which Christ would express Himself. That is what He did with His body. "Thou hast prepared me a body . . . I come to do thy will," Heb. 10 : 5-9. Christ was here wholly to do the will of God and in service to us. This is what He says at the supper : "This is my body which is given for you," Luke 22 : 19. What about our bodies? Are we taking character from Him? Think of the woman in John 4! What will she do with her body now that she has come to own allegiance to Christ, now that He has become the Man of her heart? She will use it for Him. She leaves her water-pot; she will carry what is of God in herself, her feet will move for His pleasure, her lips will speak of Him; her whole body is to be here for God. In coming to the local assembly, what an addition such a person would be! She would come in as married to Christ, as one whose body is here for God. She would bring great wealth with her, and not be merely an onlooker. We suffer greatly from mere onlookers. How many inactive members are there in my natural body? There is not one if one's body is healthy; I may not be able

to see them all, but they are all doing something for the building up of my body. That is how it should be with each of us spiritually.

Now a word about the temple. God is building His temple. David says of the temple that it must be "exceeding magnificent," 1 Chron. 22 : 5. The buildings which men have built, cathedrals supposed to be dedicated to the service of God, are poor things. Could such a building be a dwelling-place for God—the *living* God? The *living* God requires a *living* house made of *living* stones. He must have a spiritual house marked by what is magnificent. Where will you find anything magnificent, where will you find splendour, except in Christ? All splendour is connected with Him, as the Psalm says—"in thy splendour ride prosperously," Psa. 45 : 4. God's temple must be splendid. Could it be otherwise? At Corinth men were bringing in what was corrupt, and the apostle rejects what they were doing. Ananias and Sapphira tried to bring into God's temple what was corrupt. Peter said to Sapphira: "Lo, the feet of those that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out," Acts 5 : 9. It was essential that such a defiling element should be carried out. The temple of God is holy whether in its universal or local character; it is made up of material that comes from Christ only. Now how do I come into this? It is to be worked out in me so that I can really be

part of God's temple here, and I have to learn how it works as to me personally. So in 1 Corinthians 6 the apostle says: "Do ye not know that *your body is the temple* of the Holy Spirit?" How can we practically maintain the truth of God's temple unless we are in accord with the Holy Spirit, and marked by holiness. The greatest thought of God's temple is what is collective, and I understand my place there by learning to hold *my* body as a vessel which is holy. The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer's body. Are we holding our bodies in the light of this? How can we have holiness or magnificence collectively, if the Spirit of God is grieved in us individually; if holiness is not maintained in each? Holiness is the great feature. We are to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," 1 Chron. 16:29; according to God what is holy is beautiful. How that was seen in Christ the Holy One! His body was holy—"that holy thing." His body was the temple—"Destroy *this* temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was *this* temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body," John 2:19-21. What a holy shrine was the body of Christ! John says: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove"—the symbol of peace and of what is pleasing to God—"and it abode upon him." The Holy Spirit came down to abide there. No one Christian could

receive the Spirit in this bodily form, this complete sense. It was unique to Christ. God would fill our hearts by the Holy Spirit, but He is infinitely greater than we are personally. The Holy Spirit as fire can sit on each one, but not even Peter or John could have all the fire ; they could not have all the anointing oil. The Holy Spirit is great enough to take up residence in every Christian. When it says the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a bodily form, it means that the Spirit came in His entirety—in a complete way. The Holy Spirit in completeness came upon Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is great enough to take up residence in every believer's body.

Now if there are thirty persons coming together, each one of them married to Christ, each one a member of His body, holding their bodies for God, each one a vessel of the Holy Spirit ; having judged what is unholy in themselves, in their associations, in what they read, in what they do, what days we would have on earth ! As this is maintained, we should have the days of heaven on earth, and this is known to some extent. The consciousness of the love of Christ for the assembly is being enjoyed, the body of Christ is coming into evidence, features of Christ are being seen in their beautiful variety, and the temple of God is known with its glory, and light and worship. These things are the work of God, and God's work must go on. Even Balaam recognised that ;

as he looked at Israel from the top of the rock, as he saw God's thought about them, he said in regard to a coming day : "it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought !" Num. 23 : 23. That is what is going on, and one would like to rouse deep interest in our hearts that we may enjoy our part in God's assembly.

If I have the light of God's assembly, what is any national assembly to me as compared with the assembly of God ! Then what can there be greater than the body of Christ over which Christ is Head ? Christ "is the head of the body, the assembly," Col. 1 : 18. How all that of which man is head fades away when we think of that of which Christ is Head ! Then there is the temple of God, which is holy and great and wonderful, and in which we have part ! Every Christian is to have part in what God is bringing to pass on these three lines—first he is married to Christ Himself, then *his* body is held for God, and then *his* body is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is how the thing works livingly and practically. Divine Persons are engaged gathering the assembly, forming the body of Christ, building the temple ; this is the present work of God. People are so occupied with what He has done in the past, and some Christians are much occupied with what He will do in the coming world—books are written about the Lord's coming and the millennium, etc.—but is the Lord doing nothing now ? Are these two thousand years of

no account? How shall we allow such a thought? He is doing a great work and He says: "Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold." We also read: "So shall I talk of thy wondrous works," Psa. 119:27. What do we talk about in our intercourse one with another? Is His wondrous work so little to us that we do not talk about it? Think of *all* His wondrous works, and we shall have much to talk about! The Lord help us to consider the work of God for His name's sake.

## THE GREATNESS OF GOD

PSALM 18 :29; JOHN 20 :16-18; REVELATION 3 :7-13

I HAVE in mind, dear brethren, with the Lord's help, to speak about God, the greatest theme for any creature; One whose greatness, indeed, is unsearchable. Hence one would speak humbly, with the consciousness of definite limitations; nevertheless God would be spoken of. The Psalmist says, "let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified," Psa. 40 : 16, and he repeats in other psalms the words "The Lord be magnified." God is to become continually greater to us; the meaning of being magnified is that He becomes greater; not that He could be greater in Himself, for "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness," 1 Chron. 29 : 11. David says God would have our hearts continually open to receive fresh impressions of Himself, so that He becomes greater and greater to us. The continuation of the magnifying of God will never cease because there is no limit to His greatness. The same applies to Christ Jesus our Lord. It is the mind of God to magnify Christ, as it is said of Solomon that God greatly magnified him, and He magnifies His word above all His name, Psa. 138 : 2. I believe He is doing it in our day. He is magnifying His

word. What a day it is to hear His word—His voice, to hear that which expresses His mind, and it is to be magnified. It is the divine antidote to what is coming in in christendom, for we are drawing near to the time when there will be a man who will “magnify himself above every god,” Dan. 11 : 36. “He magnified himself even to the prince of the host,” we read in Daniel 8 : 11, and this is beginning around us ; the exaltation of man away from God. The ministry of the present time is to magnify God, to magnify Christ and to magnify His word—His present voice to our souls contained in the precious Scriptures, for they never were more dear to those who have ears to hear.

I had in mind to say a few words about God. The Psalmist says, “from eternity to eternity thou art God,” Psa. 90 : 2—*from eternity*—that is backward. Think of God from eternity ! Scripture speaks of the beginning of His *way* ; when He began to move in relation to creation—the beginning of *His way*, not the beginning of God—there is no such thought, but the beginning of His way ; the beginning when He moved out in relation to creation ; but before His way began, “from eternity . . . thou art God.” God *was*, dear brethren, in eternity, in His inexpressible sufficiency. Our feeble minds cannot take it in, but from eternity there was God ; sufficient in Himself in eternity, when there were no heavens and no

earth and no angels and no men. He *was* God. Then we look on to eternity, and God will fill it—God, all in all, 1 Cor. 15 : 28. A more blessed and glorious outlook cannot be perceived, the new heavens and the new earth inhabited by families, and God all and in all ; God everything in His universe ; a condition of such blessedness and such delight to God, that it will go on to all eternity. That is what God is preparing us for. He is not only preparing us for the world to come, when He will see His triumph over evil, when He will display that “the Lord is a man of war,” Exod. 15 : 3. The Lord has triumphed gloriously, He will display that, but the world to come is the victory of good over evil, and God over Satan, and Christ over the world ; but God is also preparing us for eternity when God is all and in all—He is everything—He is worthy to be everything. He is disclosing to our hearts more and more what He is so that we should come to it that He should be everything.

The great question in the history of mankind is idolatry. There was never a more idolatrous world than this one in which we live. Idolatry is sweeping through christendom ; 2 Timothy 3 makes clear that there are many idols controlling men’s hearts in the last days. It says “in the last days” men will be lovers of *themselves*—which is idolatry—lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having no love

for what is good. I only refer to that as modern idolatry in the last days, every feature of which as it is allowed displaces God from our hearts. But David says, "The Lord be magnified," and that is the way God displaces the idols. He magnifies Himself to us and He magnifies Christ.

I want to refer for a moment to God as known by His people. When we reach that blessed day of which I have spoken, when God is everything, there will be gathered up into that world all the true knowledge of God from the outset; all that Abel knew about God carried over to it, all that Enoch knew, for he walked with God for three hundred years. Who can say what he did not know—for three hundred years he walked with God, and all that he learnt in his soul of God is intact for eternity, and also all that Noah knew of God. God is spoken of in Scripture as the God of Shem—the God Shem knew; we know little of what Shem did know, but the thing that Shem knew will adorn eternity—the knowledge that he had of God. Blessed be the God of Shem, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and the God of Nahor. Nahor may not have had much knowledge of God, but Scripture speaks of the God of Nahor. The God of Joseph—for what a God Joseph knew! Think of the accumulated knowledge of God that he gathered up and secured in his day. The God of Moses, the God of Samuel, the God of

David, the God of Solomon ; every feature of the knowledge of God in these beloved saints is intact. Mary the mother of Jesus said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour," Luke 1 : 46, 47. Is that lost ? It cannot be lost. All enters into that which will fill that coming day when God is all in all.

I want now to say a word or two of some who speak of God as "my God," as if they were alone here. Jacob speaks of "my God." God is the God of Jacob, but he also says, "my God," feebly at first, for little he knew God at first, but he does say this, "then shall the Lord be my God," Gen. 28 : 21, and in speaking to Joseph he says, "the God of thy father." One loves increasingly the end of Jacob's life, because it may be our own end, please God, the end of the assembly on earth, the end of the Spirit's work in our day, typified in the closing scenes of Jacob. He had some knowledge of God from the outset, for he valued the blessing immensely ; that denotes he had some knowledge of God. He would take steps to get the blessing of God, denoting that he had some knowledge of God, and in his prayer to which I have referred he speaks to God, that if He would bless him and keep him, then the Lord should be his God.

As the accumulated knowledge of God comes to light when Jacob is dying and his journey is finished, we see how beautifully he speaks of God.

He says to Joseph, "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day," Gen. 48 : 15. He is looking back upon all his life, he is looking at every day, at every sorrow ; he thinks of the death of Rachel, of the loss of Joseph, Simeon, and Benjamin, of his own unhappy doings at times, his wanderings ; he can think of all the sorrows that had come into his heart as he learnt what he was in his children—a most painful way to learn it. That is what he did. He learnt what he was in his sons, as well as what he had already learnt in himself. As the journey is drawing to an end and he looks back on it all, he says, "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day." There has never been a moment He has given me up ; He has followed me, cared for me, protected me and fed me all my life long. "The Angel that redeemed me from all evil," Gen. 48 : 16—the Angel there is another reference to God. He has redeemed me from all evil. He has taken me out of its power when I would have been swept away but for His gracious hand. So Jacob blesses the two sons of Joseph. He puts Ephraim first, and Joseph must learn as well as Jacob that the matter of first importance is fruitfulness. Ephraim means fruitfulness. Jacob could say, I have come to it and I know it. Joseph did not know it yet, but Jacob knew it ; God must be first ; something for God in our lives must be first. Forgetfulness can come afterwards ; there is

much to be forgotten, but the first thing is something for God. In his earlier days the first thing with Jacob, as with all of us, was something for himself, but Jacob has reversed all that now by his knowledge of God. Then it says he worshipped. God is so blessed to his soul that language cannot express what is in his heart. Mere language is not worship; worship is more than language. As the beloved poet says, "There only to adore." That is not mere words, there may be that which cannot be expressed in words. The deepest feelings of the soul cannot be expressed in words. We are not told that Jacob said anything at that moment. It says he worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff—a dependent man at the end—dependent on God as knowing Him and loving Him, so that he says "my God," the God that has brought me to be true to my name—a supplanter. Jacob has come to it that all that is natural in him must be supplanted, and what is of God and of Christ must take its place. The knowledge of God establishes his name. "The God of Jacob, Selah."

I refer now to David. David says, "by my God have I leaped over a wall." What a God was David's God! A God that David had learned to recognise as his own—"my God." You will find it repeatedly in Scripture in relation to David—especially in the Psalms. He says "my God," the God that would make me true to my name. The name means "beloved." A man that is

lovable—a man that God loves. Think of God operating to make that true, a man that God can look down upon and love. He says, “by my God have I leaped over a wall.” Every wall that has ever confronted me, by my God have I leaped over it. Think of his early days, the first two walls that he ever faced as far as we know, when it says there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. That young life—descriptive somewhat of Christ. The lion and the bear came as they always do to young souls. No Christian has gone many days in his spiritual history before the lion has come to devour him, and the bear to rend him in pieces. It was Satan that attempted to destroy David in his youth. Many are marred for the testimony in their early days because the lion or the bear assails them ; and we all would be unavailable but for divine grace. David learned to know God—“my God.” He says, “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear,” 1 Sam. 17 : 37. He had learned God in secret as able to deliver him from the lion and the bear. It is a matter of the greatest importance to young Christians that we should learn in secret when we are young what God can do for us. If we have not learned this, we shall be unfit to have part in the testimony in relation to anything that is public. What lies behind what is public must be learning to know God in secret. When David comes into public view he

says, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

David had also learned what God could do through the power of the musical instrument. He had learned in secret that a heart responsive to God was a wonderful instrument. I wonder where our hearts are secretly. Not what we say publicly, but what are the movements in our hearts in secret? It was said of David in his early days that he was a cunning player on the harp—a man who produced music as an expression of his heart towards God. So far as we know he had never played in public before Saul sent for him, saying, "Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep." He came with his harp, and shows that it is a mighty weapon against evil. The power of evil must flee if we have good harps and skilled music spiritually. David learned the value of that. Later when Solomon had built the temple and the singers and players were serving with the musical instruments and made one sound, the glory of God filled the house.

David's knowledge of God as "my God," he learned right through his life. As every wall appeared he is in touch with God as his own God, "by my God have I leaped over a wall." Every difficulty is overcome by the true knowledge of God.

Just a word as to Daniel, who also says "my

God." A God that he personally knew, who controlled him personally and for whom he lived, as Darius recognised when he said, "is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?" Darius had watched him, and so he says, *This man continually serves his God.* Daniel says, "My God hath sent his angel," Dan. 6 : 22. What an experience Daniel had with God as learning to know him from his youth! There is no time more important than youth. It is of the greatest importance that we should gain the knowledge of God in our youth, and Daniel does that. Daniel with his friends purposed not to defile himself with the king's meat—a holy purpose takes possession of their hearts, and God grant it may take hold of every one of us, that we may not be defiled by the corruptions of the world, however attractive to the flesh they may appear to be, however much they may appear to bring pleasure. Daniel determined he would not defile himself with the king's meat or with the wine which he drank, and he learns that God can make him "fairer and fatter" than others by having pulse and water—captives' food. Simple as to the natural mind and of no importance, but food that develops a fairer and better constitution than all the king's food and wine could do.

Daniel learns that the God whom he serves is such a God as this. As he learns God further he learns that He can disclose secrets. When the

inhuman decision of Nebuchadnezzar was made that all the wise men of Babylon must be slain because they could not tell him his dream, Daniel seeks God and finds that He is a discloser of secrets, and he blesses the God of heaven. As he is strengthened in his soul there comes increase in the true knowledge of God and he grows by it. Later he finds that God is so to be trusted and so to be served that He can maintain him in integrity in all his responsible life. Not one thing could be laid as a charge against him in which he was unfaithful. Who could enable a man to do that but God? The secret of it is that he was in touch with God. Indeed it says at that very time that Daniel opened his window towards Jerusalem and prayed and gave thanks to God three times a day as aforetime, Dan. 6 : 10, as he was accustomed to do. The secret of Daniel's prosperity was that he was accustomed to open his window towards Jerusalem to look out upon divine interests. On the earth, however broken and under the power of the enemy they might seem to be at the moment, his outlook was Jerusalem. Three times a day—as he began his day, in the heat of the day, and at the close of it—he prayed and gave thanks to God. He gave thanks as well as prayed, as aforetime. We hear of some of the customs amongst the saints to-day. Let us embrace this custom of Daniel's, that three times a day he prayed and gave thanks. His whole day was characterised by

dependence on God and thanksgiving, and interest in what is of God on the earth. Finally we find him cast into the den of lions, and there is not the slightest evidence of struggle. The Scripture records no idea whatever of any struggle on Daniel's part. He submits to the whole matter, committing himself to God, "my God." We shall need that soon if the Lord does not come; for without doubt there are lions' dens ahead, there are great tests ahead, and what will support us is that each can say, "my God." So there comes back the message from the dungeon to Darius, "My God hath sent his angel"—Daniel's God—a God that makes Daniel true to his name. Daniel means "God is judge," and Daniel has God's judgment of the whole situation, whether it be Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar, whether it be the princes of Darius, whether it be the food and the wine of the king, he has God's judgment about things; his name is Daniel and God works in him to make him true to his name. Daniel will be in the new heaven and the new earth, he will have his part in the new universe and take into it all that he gathered up of the knowledge of God, whom he describes as "my God."

A word or two about Paul's God. Paul also says "my God." He says "our God" as every Christian does, but he says "my God." What an accumulation of the knowledge of God Paul gathered up! Think of what came into his soul

near Damascus as he heard the words of Jesus : "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? " Acts 9 : 4. What he learned there was this, "God, who is rich in mercy," Eph. 2 : 4. There came an indelible impression into the soul of Saul of Tarsus of the wealth of divine mercy that could speak like that to him from heaven—blasphemer, persecutor, insolent, overbearing man, but he says, "I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. 1 : 16. I do not think we have much of the knowledge of God if we do not come to that. Mercy is the first impression we get of God if we get right impressions. Then Paul went his way growing by the true knowledge of God, learning to know what God could do under all conditions, until he could say in truth, "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God," 2 Cor. 5 : 13. God was so great, so blessed to the soul of Paul that it led him to an ecstasy. He was lifted out of himself, as David also says in almost similar words, "God my exceeding joy," Psa. 43 : 4. Paul says, "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." He also says, "my God shall supply all your need," Phil. 4 : 19, as if to say, I have learned to know my God and the boundless stores of wealth that He has according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. I have learned my God in such a way that no situation can arise but what He can provide everything that is needed for me. He tells the Philippians that God will provide for them, for they had

provided for him and sent to him out of much affliction. He turns to them and says "my God," the God I have learned, the God I know, He will supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus; so that he is maintained to the end true to his name—Paul, which means "little"—and he is maintained in true lowliness in his own eyes from outside the gates of Damascus until he says, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." How truly he said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given," Eph. 3 : 8. In every soul this is going on in various measure, and it will all be manifested; all the knowledge of God that the saints have acquired, will be found resplendent in the day of eternity.

I want to say a little, with the Lord's help, on what the Lord Jesus says when He speaks of "my God." He says to Mary, "go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." This is something infinitely great, altogether greater than the knowledge that Jacob had of God. Jacob says "my God," David says "my God," Daniel says "my God," Paul says "my God," but when Jesus says "my God" it is on a platform infinitely higher than anything that had been known or spoken of by anyone before. Our knowledge of God is first acquired through the unravelling of the question of good and evil in our souls; through the work of God in the heart that

has been stained by sin and brought under Satan's power. The works of the devil have had to be undone in our hearts, idols removed before bringing God into the heart of the creature; but that can have no connection with our Lord saying "my God." All those of whom I have spoken were naturally "of the earth, earthy"—they bore the image of the earthy, they have partaken of fallen Adam in their moral being. The Lord Jesus was *the Second Man, out of heaven*; that is what He was as coming into this world, the Second Man, out of heaven, the heavenly One; He never was of the earth, earthy. He was the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit, but He was Man, a Man of another order. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," Luke 1:35, and in another place He is called "the Son of the Highest." He belongs to heaven, His manhood belongs to heaven, He is not of the earth, He is the Second Man, out of heaven, but He is a Man. There is something there that never was there before; a mystery that no human mind can comprehend! He is God, of course, as to His own Person, and we love to confess it. He was God and He is God as to His Person; but He is the Second Man, out of heaven, and as in that position He says "my God." O what must be in that! It is His lan-

guage all through. "I was cast upon thee from the womb ; . . . thou art my God," Psa. 22 : 10. As He came into this world it is said of Him through David, "thou art my God." No question of God's place being usurped by another there, but a heavenly Man who says, "my God." He says, again through the Psalmist, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." He knew God and He loved Him, a God that He served, a God that was the delight of His soul, in holy heavenly manhood. He says when upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" Psa. 22 : 1. A knowledge of God that was peculiar to that heavenly Man—the Second Man, out of heaven ; a different knowledge of God from Jacob's, or David's, or Daniel's, or Paul's. He says it to Mary at the tomb in resurrection, "go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God." The One who had ever been supreme as known by the Second Man, out of heaven ; that God, He says, is also your God ; He would bring them into it by breathing into them anticipatively His own life, that of the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit. How little we know of God in that character every heart must admit.

In the Revelation, the Lord speaking from heaven confirms it. He says to Philadelphia, to him that overcomes, to him who gives Him His own right place in the assembly, who refuses

any other, but enthrones Him as the Head of the assembly, to him that does that and maintains it, to him that overcomes, "I will write upon him the name of my God," put an indelible mark upon him, so that he is expressive, by the name that is on him, of My God. God as known by the Second Man, out of heaven ; a different knowledge of God, a higher knowledge of God, a more glorious knowledge of God than can ever be conceived by any of the fallen sons of Adam, known primarily by the Second Man, out of heaven, who speaks of God as "my God." The Lord says, if there is anyone who overcomes in Philadelphia, and who secures to Him His proper place in the assembly, as far as he is concerned, He says, "I will write upon him the name of my God." The One of whom Jesus speaks as "my God"—that God will be known and loved and served, and His name written on those who inhabit that glorious scene in the day of eternity, when God will be all and in all.

May the Lord help us, dear brethren, to grow by the true knowledge of God.

## IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUANCE

DANIEL 1 : 21 ; ACTS 26 : 22, 23 ; HEBREWS 13 : 1

ONE would desire to speak a little of the importance of continuance at the present time. It is manifest that we are living in a day when many are going back, even outwardly, from what was once held and for which men of God have suffered in this land as elsewhere. What marks the position publicly is a turning away from what has been maintained, and the Lord would appeal to us, as He did to His own when here. It says, "From that time many of his disciples went back," and the Lord said to His own, "Will ye also go away ?" and Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go ?" In spite of the darkness and apostasy that are setting in, in spite of our own failures and inconsistencies, shall we not also say, "to whom shall we go ?"

I would like to speak a little of what would help us to continue, for the Lord loves those who continue, though He does not ignore our weakness and need of adjustment. He says, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." How the Lord would value our continuance, and would help us to be amongst those who continue, as the end of the assembly's sojourn is in sight.

One is conscious of the tremendous efforts of the enemy to baffle and turn away the young. What a privilege is open to us, therefore, to continue to the end. One of the great features with Joseph was that he continued. We think of him sent out from his father's house, having before him the known will of God, and he pursued it at Shechem, at Dothan, and in Potiphar's house, where he said, "how should I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. 39:9. He pursued it in the prison, bringing the mind of God into evidence. He pursued it when he was exalted in Egypt and in his dealings with his brethren. "Continuance" can be written over Joseph's history, and he is a blessed figure of Christ. In the prophet Micah it says, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel," Mic. 5:2. From that lowly spot, Bethlehem, One would come forth, and from infancy would tread every step for God, He continued perfectly as He began, to the last step of the journey. "Unto me" could be written over the whole of the Lord's pathway through this world, and He would help us to continue.

I referred to Daniel in the scripture read because it says, "Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus." He is introduced to us in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and he goes through to the

reign of Belshazzar, of Darius, and of Cyrus, the day when God came in publicly for His people. Some of us think it is easy enough to continue when everything is bright, but Daniel continued in the most testing circumstances and in one of the darkest days in the history of God's people. So Daniel "continued," and later on it says of him "this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," Dan. 6:28. What was the secret that enabled him to go on in the midst of tremendous tests, and never to turn back until God came in? I would like to touch briefly, and necessarily in a limited way, on what lay behind Daniel's public history, on what enabled him to continue, as affording us help to do so even if the day gets darker and more testing, for there is always provision made for us.

First of all, Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. He determined that he would not feed upon that which the world feeds upon, nor enjoy its pleasures. Let us likewise determine that we will not defile ourselves with what provides food for the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. It is a matter of reaching the thing in our minds. Everyone would admit failure and weakness, but it is a question of the attitude of our mind. In the world, a luxurious diet is provided for

men, a kingly diet that will build up giants, as it was in the end of the period before the flood. It says "There were giants in the earth in those days," Gen. 6:4, and the same characteristics are arising in men to-day—giants in pride, in lust, and in covetousness; but Daniel determined that he would not eat the king's meat.

In the books that are available, in the newspapers, in the religious activities of the world, there is much of the king of Babylon's food, and it needs determination on our part that we will not eat it. Then there are the joys that stimulate this world. I do not want to touch on what they are, but we do not have to go far to find "the wine which he drank." Daniel determined he would not have that, but what he chose was pulse and water, that which would bring into evidence features of Christ; nothing to make a man great in this world, nothing to develop that which men take account of, but that which would secure the features of Christ in men.

There is no question but that we take character from what we eat. If a man eats what is corrupt, he becomes corrupt; if we feed upon Christ, the inevitable result will be that features of Christ will be seen. Pulse and water is no doubt a reference to Christ in His lowly, blessed character, something like the manna, and Daniel comes out in His character. If he had turned aside to eat the king's food and to drink his wine, he would have

been missing at the end, but it says he continued to the reign of Cyrus.

Another feature that greatly helped Daniel was that he was in touch with the God of heaven, his outlook was not towards the earth. Over and over again he speaks of "the God of heaven"—a magnificent title for us to take account of in these days. How magnificent is the order, the rule and the beauty of heaven, and what a wonderful sphere it is! As God said to Job, "Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? dost thou determine their rule over the earth?" Job 38:33. It is only on earth that there is confusion, and there man's will and lust and pride mar everything; but Daniel could speak of, and his soul was set upon, the "God of heaven," and nothing would divert him. One has often thought of what is said of Martin Luther, that repeatedly he said, in face of the mightiest powers of the earth, "God is in heaven." This assurance sustained him in the presence of the greatest opposition, as it sustained Daniel. What language for us, too, to take account of as the religious, the international, the social, the commercial world all tremble, everything shaking that can be shaken, how blessed to rely upon the God of heaven! Heaven will not fail and God's omnipotence and supremacy will not give way. In the power of that Daniel continued until the reign of Cyrus.

Another feature is that he opened his window

towards Jerusalem three times a day, and kneeled down and prayed and gave thanks "as he did aforetime." The Spirit of God takes away the veil from one of the secrets of Daniel's life in saying, "as he did aforetime"—this was his custom. We often hear to-day about customs among God's people. Would that this custom of Daniel's was increasingly one of them. A man like that is bound to go through. "They shall prosper that love thee," says the Psalmist, of Jerusalem, Psa. 122 : 6. "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill," Psa. 137 : 5. Daniel did not forget Jerusalem, his outlook was not himself, or his own blessing or service, but it was the city of God, the assembly, in other words. Jerusalem lay in ruins at that time, but yet his outlook was towards it, and he looked out upon God's interests. He pursued them thus, and closed the day accordingly—he kneeled down and prayed. One would like to have heard his prayers, and indeed we have some of them recorded by the Spirit of God. They were not prayers such as Jacob's, or some of ours. Jacob said, "If God will be with *me*, and keep *me* . . . of all that thou wilt give me I will without fail give the tenth to thee," Gen. 28 : 20-22 (N.T.). That was not Daniel's prayer, as recorded later in the book ; his prayers fill one with delight, and yet shame, as to oneself, as one takes account of his holy interest and longings for blessing on Jerusalem.

Then it says he gave thanks. If we do not give thanks we shall drop out ; for murmurers and complainers always drop out of the testimony. In the darkest day there is always reason, not only to pray, but to give thanks, as viewing the work and the thoughts of God, and His delight in bringing to pass His own will. A man who prays and gives thanks with his windows open toward Jerusalem will go through to the end, he will not be diverted.

Then we are told that Daniel understood by books ; they had a great place with Daniel. I plead with the young especially ; what place have the books with you, and first of all the Scriptures ? One of the books that Daniel read and understood was the prophet Jeremiah. He paid great attention to the Scriptures. Do we read the Scriptures ? If we do not read them we shall fail in the testimony. They are given "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. 3 : 17. If we have not the Scriptures in our minds we are deficient, they should always come first, but when it says that Daniel understood by the books, I have no doubt it is a reference to ministry that God was giving in that day. The end of the first book of Chronicles refers to the history and the time that passed over David. It says "the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer,

and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer," 1 Chron. 29 : 29. If we do not pay attention to the ministry that the Lord gives in our day, as well as to the Scriptures, we shall not continue as Daniel did, as one who valued the books.

When the princes, the leading men in Darius' day, sought to terminate Daniel's position in the testimony, they examined all his affairs and they found that he was faithful. When they looked into the matter of his stewardship under Darius, they found they could not touch him on that account, for he was faithful in everything. We shall certainly drop out if that is not true of us. If our individual history with God is not marked by faithfulness in the positions of trust in which we are placed, in our relationship as husband or wife, parents or children, masters or servants ; if the enemy can touch us in any of these, we shall not continue. Daniel's enemies searched into everything and they found they could only touch him in relation to God. What heart-breaking exposures we have had of those who appeared to continue outwardly, but who had a history of unrighteousness. Be not deceived, sooner or later we shall publicly fail if the enemy can touch us on any matter of unrighteousness. The knowledge that puffs up, and the ability to retain things in the mind avails nothing. As Daniel was found faithful in his position as steward, so we must

maintain integrity in the responsibilities placed upon us, or we shall not continue. The young men, especially, are open to the enemy's attempts to damage them in their early days, by committal to unrighteous principles and acts, so that they are lost to the testimony.

I want to pursue the thought a little further with regard to Paul. What marked that beloved servant was, that he also continued. He says, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." Did he have an easy path? Had he no tests? If any of us want to be humbled, just read the list of trials through which he continued. He started in a path from which he never went back. He says, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; . . . in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, . . . in perils among false brethren"; but he steadily pursued his course, and what sustained him? He says, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue." The help which is from God travels only one way, and as Paul was travelling upon the same road, he got the gain of it. When he surrendered his own will and bowed to the Lord Jesus Christ, he handed everything to Him—his body, his affections, his time, his labour, his money—

he gave everything to Christ. The help which is from God is found on that road. Help which is *not* from God will not enable us to continue. If we seek help from the natural man, or from any party gathered round ourselves, that is not the line of continuance. The line of continuance is getting the help which is from God, and that involves subjection to Christ, a surrender to His claims in relation to all that we have and are. Divine help is available to all such. As Paul was standing on his trial, he says, "I continue unto this day"; however dark the day was, he would go on to the end.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle in appealing to the saints, in his closing word says, "Let brotherly love continue"; those affections that flow between brethren. There is to be love, the highest kind of love, which comes from God. In brotherly love we are told to have love, 2 Pet. 1 : 7, but nevertheless brotherly love is important. The apostle says that the love that is proper between brothers is to continue. How beautifully it continued between Paul and Peter—Peter speaks of him as "our beloved brother Paul." Brotherly love does not ignore things that are wrong, for there was a moment when Peter, the first of the apostles, dissimulated and also influenced Barnabas, for it says, "even Barnabas was carried away too by their dissimulation," and Paul rebukes Peter and withstands him to the face. Neverthe-

less, brotherly love continued. One speaks sympathetically as having known something of it, but the rebuke is not to destroy brotherly love. Whether we are having part in the rebuke, or are being rebuked, we are to be careful that brotherly love continues. The Psalmist says, "Let the righteous smite me, it is kindness; and let him reprove me, it is an excellent oil which my head shall not refuse." It is an act of kindness when the righteous smite us, when we are rebuked by such, and one who is rebuked by a righteous man comes out in greater dignity than before, for it becomes as excellent oil. So Paul rebuked Peter to the face when he was to be blamed, yet the affections of Paul towards Peter were not impaired; and I believe the affections of Peter's heart were rather increased.

It is long after that incident that he speaks of him as "our beloved brother Paul." What a value he put upon the ministry of Paul! He spoke of his writings as scriptures, and containing many things "hard to be understood"; beyond his own ministry, but there was the right flow of brotherly love maintained towards Paul who had rebuked him, and I am sure on Paul's side there was no diminished affection for the first of the apostles. So in closing this epistle he says, "Let brotherly love continue." The enemy would seek to destroy those holy affections that should flow between brethren and thus prevent our continuance

in the testimony, so that there should be no Daniels to continue, no Pauls obtaining the help which is from God. The enemy seeks to break up brotherly love so that we might be diverted, but the apostle says, "Let brotherly love abide," or "continue," even if it be that we have to accept a rebuke from the Lord or from His servants. Let the bonds of brotherly love continue and be strengthened in the hearts of the brethren, so that we may each one of us "pursue" as the stars in their courses. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, we are told in Judges 5:20, and every "star" has a part in the overthrow of the power of evil, if it keeps in its course.

One would appeal to one's brethren—let each of us go on in our course, holding Christ adoringly in His supreme place, so that each proceeds in his course in relation to the service of the Lord and His people, and let the bonds of brotherly love continue until He comes.

## THE MEANS OF CLEANSING

LEVITICUS 14:1-7, 48-53; NUMBERS 19:1-6

ONE desires, beloved brethren, to say a few words that might help us to see afresh something that is carried over from the Lord's sojourn here. Scripture distinguishes in some ways between the thought of what the Lord was and what He is. The word is that "we shall see him as he is." We have not known Him here in flesh and blood, and if we had, it is, "henceforth know we him no more." One desired, with the Lord's help, to speak particularly of what is carried over from the scene of His suffering—what abides in that way.

I would like to dwell upon this scripture in Leviticus. The prime bearing, of course, relates to what is provided for cleansing, whether it be for individuals or for a house. I had no thought of referring to the literal connection, but to speak of the Lord as presented in these two birds and also to refer to the cedar and the scarlet and the hyssop, which I understand in Leviticus 14 to be typical of that which is carried over. In Leviticus the cedar-wood and the scarlet and the hyssop are not burnt as in Numbers 19; they are dipped in the blood of the slain bird. Indeed, too, the second bird is dipped in the blood of the slain bird, whereas in Numbers the red heifer is burnt; all

that remains is the ashes. There the cedar-wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet are all burnt, the fire consumes them, and all that is left is the ashes. The ashes have a great value, but that is all that is left in Numbers. In Leviticus the second bird is dipped in the blood of the slain bird and is let loose into the open field—liberated. The cedar is dipped in the blood, the scarlet is dipped in the blood, and the hyssop is dipped in the blood. The Spirit of God comments particularly as to the house, that the cleansing of the house is with the blood of the slain bird, and with the running water, and with the cedar, and with the scarlet and with the hyssop. All these elements are used to cleanse the house, and I have no doubt to cleanse the individual too, though it is more stressed in *relation to the house*.

It is primarily an apprehension of the meaning of the death of Christ suggested in the blood of the slain bird. What wonderful thoughts surround what is typified by the bird! Though literally so much smaller than a lamb or a bullock, in this connection it is not to introduce a smaller thought, but to bring before our hearts that the One who died, the One whose blood was shed, was heavenly. He was out of heaven; He was the Second Man, out of heaven. When the dove came down upon the Lord, it was not to bring a small thought to us, it was to bring before us the Holy Spirit as coming from heaven in all His purity, in all that

marks Him, but as come from heaven, and the Lord Jesus as typified in the slain bird is to speak to us of Himself as come from heaven—come into small conditions outwardly, but come from heaven. O what a theme for our hearts to delight in, that while the Lord Jesus took part in flesh and blood, while He was here on earth He is the Heavenly One. Not that He is that only NOW, but it was so as here, for the Lord said, “I am come down from heaven.” He is the Second Man, out of heaven. We are, as to our bodies, and as to our moral beings, except what is formed in us by the Spirit, of the earth. The first man is of the earth, earthy, but the second Man is out of heaven, yet this heavenly One is slain, it says, in an earthen vessel. That is why He became flesh. What thoughts of Christ fill our hearts as we think of Him coming into flesh and blood to die! It says, “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” The first bird is slain in an earthen vessel, and the blood of the slain bird is part of the wondrous process of the cleansing of the leper and of the house. Then it says it is slain over running water. I do not know anything more wonderful, more interesting, more delightful than running water. To sit by a stream of running water is one of the delights of earth, to see it moving on and on in ever constant freshness. The Spirit of God is represented in the figure carrying livingly first of all into the leprous heart, but into all our

hearts, the living wondrous meaning of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth from all sin. The living water is flowing to carry livingly, freshly, and blessedly the meaning of the death of Christ to our hearts.

Then it says the living bird is to be dipped in the blood of the slain bird. Because of the limitation of figures you must have two birds, but the meaning is clear. The living bird that is dipped in the blood of the slain bird is the blessed Lord Jesus Christ out of death. The heavenly One cannot remain in death, it was not possible that He should be holden of death, He must be released. The bands of death must be loosed and He is freed, like the living bird He is set loose in the open field with liberty to soar where He will. Such is our blessed Lord, as having come out of death He is loosed as it were in the open field, without restraint to move where He will. How we love to think of Peter's words, "Who is gone into heaven," loosed from the power of death, death having no more dominion over Him. He has gone into heaven indeed, beyond all limits, far above all the heavens that He might fill all things. It says before the living bird is loosed it is dipped in the blood of the slain bird. The living bird loosed in the open field carries the witness of death upon it. It is dipped in the blood of the slain bird, to bear the witness of death. Think of our blessed Lord loosed from the power of death,

free to go into heaven, but carrying with Him the witness of His death. What an influence it will have when He is seen like that! In Revelation 5 it says, there stood in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders and in the midst of the living creatures, a Lamb "as slain." Not "as it had been," but the New Translation says, "as slain," that is with the present evidence of death. Not that it is literally present, but the evidence is there as present, "as slain." The acclamations of a redeemed universe are not to be silenced when they see Him. The influence of the One who bears the marks of having died awakens the responses of the universe. So the Lord Jesus has been loosed from death, carrying in His blessed Person as Man the witness to our hearts of His death. He has "gone into heaven," Peter says. In the Acts it says, "they beholding him." They watched Him ascend, "and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Then it says that the cedar is to be dipped in the blood. One loves to think of that. You know the cedar here represents the kingly greatness of Christ as a Man. I think trees in Scripture always refer to what grows here on earth, and there grew up before God in the Person of Jesus in manhood the true cedar, that kingly stately tree in which greatness is expressed. The angel announced at His birth that, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest."

Think of a cedar that towered up like that, the Son of the Highest growing up here, the supreme greatness of Christ towering up majestically above every other! We think of Him in His hour of temptation, how He stands out as a mighty cedar, towering above everything in His glory; we think of Him on the mount and the kingly features that are there; we think of Him in Gethsemane—what true majesty is there, superior to, greater than all! If we think of Him at Calvary, even the dying robber could see the true cedar, the kingly glory and majesty of Christ, all that is so supremely great in Him in manhood. I am not thinking for the moment of His inscrutable greatness in the Deity, I am speaking of His greatness in manhood, for that is what a tree represents. The cedar is dipped in the blood, all went into death. The greatness of Christ as Man all went into death, but it all comes out of death; all true greatness in manhood is carried over through His death and abides for ever. What an influence for cleansing a human heart or a house, to realise that the heavenly One died, His precious blood has been shed; for the living effect of that to come into a heart, to realise that the One who died has gone into heaven carrying the witness of His death with Him, to realise that all true greatness resides in Christ still—what a cleansing effect that has upon us!

Then the scarlet. The scarlet, as I understand

it, is what makes one conspicuous. The Lord Jesus, we are told, went away and hid Himself. He never sought to be conspicuous. They said to Him, Show Thyself to the world, but He says, "My time is not yet come," nevertheless it also says He could not be hid. He did not seek to be conspicuous, to show the scarlet, but it was always there, and for those who had eyes to see it, it could not be hid. He could not be hid. How many and many a one discerns it! "I also am a man set under authority," says one; "say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." The centurion had seen who wore the scarlet. Even the blind beggar saw it. "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The dying robber saw it as he looked upon the King; he also saw the One who was supremely great, who was conspicuous according to heaven; to whom the kingdom must come—Thy kingdom. It was all covered up as far as man's sight was concerned, but it was there. The scarlet is dipped in the blood, the blessed One who is notable in heaven has been into death, but all that makes Him stand out blessedly great and notable to our hearts abides still. None of it is burnt, none of it is destroyed, it passes over. The scarlet is dipped in the blood, as we look upon Him in His greatness we still remember He died. As we see the King in His beauty, that mighty cedar, we shall ever remember that He died.

What a range of thoughts God presents to us in these figures, and how wonderful they are! The Psalmist says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Solomon speaks of it. He spoke of all the trees from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall. The cedar tree does not spring out of the wall; it is stately and majestic and immense in its stature. It must have the forest and the mountain for room for it, so great is the cedar. But the hyssop will grow wherever it can get a corner. It will fit in anywhere, it is so small. Think of our blessed Lord like that! Was not He like that here? Who could look at Bethlehem's manger without thinking of the hyssop! Did anyone ever have such a place in which to be laid? They laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Look at Him at Nazareth, such a place that I have no doubt none of us would care to live in. He went down to Nazareth and was called Jesus of Nazareth. Look at Him in His public life in the house of Simon the leper. If there is room for Him in the house of Simon the leper, then the hyssop will be there. If there is room for Him in the heart of a Mary Magdalene once possessed of seven demons, He will fit in there. If a dying robber could find a corner for Him He will fit in there. It is the lowliness of Jesus. He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." It is true in all His lowliness and meekness He did go into

death, the hyssop was dipped in the blood of the slain bird but it was not destroyed. It has not disappeared; it could not disappear. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." "Who art thou, Lord?" says Saul. He says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth." Not, I was, but *I am*. I am in heaven on the throne of the greatness of the majesty in the heavens, but I am Jesus of Nazareth. He is still the same lowly, blessed, humble, accessible One, prepared to come into our hearts and live there; tiny little spots as they are, but all that He is as suggested by the hyssop is preserved, and for cleansing.

In Leviticus 14 it says that the priest would cleanse the house with the blood, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar and with the scarlet and with the hyssop. All these things would have a bearing in the process of cleansing: first upon the heart of an individual that has come under the defiling influence of sin, and secondly upon a house, upon a gathering, where the opposite to these things have been working. That is what causes leprosy in a house, the opposite to what is suggested in what I have been saying has been operative, but the priest comes in, and with the blood of the slain bird, the running water, the living bird, the cedar, the scarlet and the hyssop cleanses the house and the person. If we would open our hearts and the gatherings of the saints to

these blessed influences, what a cleansing effect it would have upon us, and does have, thank God.

Now I want to say a word or two about the opposite. In Numbers 19 we have one of the most touching scenes of Scripture. Again it is a matter of cleansing; the water of purification being prepared. The priest is to take a red heifer without spot, without a single defect, upon whom never yoke came. Where could you find her? It is not often feminine figures are used of Christ, but this is one of the few occasions, and is intended to call attention to what He was inwardly—in secret. The man refers to what is public—what is responsible; the woman refers to what is hidden and secret, and I believe the Lord is referred to under this figure. Conspicuous again is the red colour—conspicuous in secret purity and devotedness to God. Conspicuous outwardly too, but inwardly also. The inward extent and perfection of His devotedness is seen in the red heifer—not a spot inwardly, and there is not one outwardly. The dying robber says “this man hath done nothing amiss,” there is no spot; but he could not look into the inward parts of Jesus. As God looks into it, His eyes discerning between soul and spirit, between thoughts and intents, there is not a spot inwardly, not a blemish, not an imperfection. How often things may pass outwardly with us as to our conduct and our words and so on, but what is there inside? Inwardly,

“full of dead men’s bones,” the Lord says of some. What awful corruption is often inside, smothered from expression maybe, in every man, but inwardly in Jesus there was not an imperfection, not one. He never bore any yoke outwardly. Man could never see the Lord yoked up with anything that was wrong. Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; inwardly also no yoke ever came upon Him. Nevertheless if there is to be purification for sin, the red heifer is to be taken, slain, and *burnt*. The Lord Jesus Christ must go into the fire of the holy judgment of God, if there is to be a means for purification for God’s people. These ashes are to be kept. Never again will He see the fire, but the ashes are stored up; all that is left of that scene is the ashes. They have not gone. The evidence that He has been into the fire remains in the ashes. Then the priest is to take the cedar and cast it into the burning, all goes into those ashes for purification.

What is the meaning of the casting into the fire of the cedar? It is the growing up here of all the outward greatness and glory of man in the flesh which we all love naturally, and which has such a tremendous place in the world—that kind of cedar is burnt in the cross of Christ, the place of the fire. Cleansing from the defilement of human greatness and pride comes by the cedar going into the fire. That is one part of the process

of the cleansing. The hyssop; probably in some respects there is more hyssop amongst us that needs burning than there is cedar. Scripture speaks of voluntary humility. How much there is in christendom of outward lowliness and humility that has no real foundation, and we have to face it, for we know it is in our hearts often. How much that is also small and petty in our conversations together, in our outlook, little insignificant things that are really of no value, they all go into the fire if there is to be cleansing. How much sorrow is caused in the gatherings of the saints at times by petty things, little things that seem to fit in any corner and produce their unhappy growth. In the burning goes the hyssop, also the scarlet—the innate desire to be conspicuous, natural to every human heart. How we naturally love it, how unholy it is. Men and women, too, alas, more than ever in these days will do anything to call attention to themselves. In the world much that is done has the object of making persons conspicuous. What is worn and what is not worn often governed by the desire to have more scarlet, but into the burning goes the cedar and the hyssop and the scarlet, all that is left is ashes, and the ashes remain for purification.

One trusts the Lord may help us to see something of what remains on these lines for us to experience individually, and in the companies of the saints, in order that there may be cleansing. On one side

the blessed Lord remains, the One out of heaven that came to die. He has now gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him, yet bearing the evidence of His suffering and death, and all the greatness that came out in Him as Man, and all that which will make Him eternally conspicuous before the universe, and all that lowliness and meekness of heart that was His. They all abide; they have been dipped in the blood, but they remain. Whereas the fire of divine judgment into which Jesus went consumes the pride and greatness of man, it consumes the voluntary humility, the pettiness of the human heart, and also the scarlet. One loves to see amongst the saints, thank God, a refusal of the kind of scarlet that the people of the world are using. One would urge that it be hated, that it be cast more than ever into the fire; the inordinate desire to make oneself conspicuous. That kind of thing goes into the fire, into which Jesus went in infinite grace that there might be ashes and the water of purification from sin available to us.

May the Lord help us in these great things.

## EXPOSURE AND ATTRACTION

GENESIS 41 : 9-13 ; ESTHER 7 : 9, 10 ; LUKE 23 : 39-43 ;  
COLOSSIANS 1 : 19-22

I HAVE no doubt that we have all at times been delighted to contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ as the great centre of the universe of God. How delightful it is to all the saints, I am sure, to gaze into heaven, as it were to look through that door opened in heaven and see with the eye of faith the Lord Jesus Christ, the centre around which stands every creature that has a place in God's universe.

We are not told in Revelation 4 and 5 that there was any command for the elders or living creatures, or indeed for the angels to surround that throne ; we are not told that they were commanded to utter their praise and worship, the secret being that there is such an appreciation of Christ in that blessed scene and of what He has done, that He is the centre there.

One desired to say a few words that the Lord might be pleased to use to help us to be more definitely drawn to Him. The Lord said, as recorded in the gospel by John, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me." Something was about to transpire that would be so powerful in its influence over the hearts of men, over the

hearts of His own, that it would draw all to Him. Then we are told that, "this he said, signifying by what death he was about to die"; not only that He would die, but "by what death." We are ready to take account of the wondrous fact that He died for us. The apostle preached that, "Christ died . . . and that he was buried." These two great facts stand out and we are reminded of the meaning of them continually. Death is the termination of life here in flesh and blood, burial takes place that what remains may be put out of sight; as Abraham said, "that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Nobody can evade these two things. Children do not live long before their reality must be seen and known, that death is here—the termination of responsible life in flesh and blood, and burial must follow; what remains must be put out of sight.

One has wondered for oneself whether "what death he should die" is taken much account of, whether the bearing of the cross is sufficiently regarded. It was in the being lifted up, not simply and only death, that there is such drawing power, as the Lord said, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me." I speak for myself, one is more ready to face death and burial than to face what being lifted up means. Being lifted up is exposure. I believe the natural heart is more ready to accept death and burial than exposure. Exposure is a terrible thing to the

human heart. I understand that is what is meant by the Lord's words, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me." Lifted up implies being exposed to reproach and open shame. As we think of what death He should die, and as we take into our hearts that it was for us, we are to feel the drawing power that holds the hearts of all ! What an awful thing it is to be hanged ! The human mind shudders at the contemplation of being hanged. It resents it. In parts of the world the thing literally is abandoned because of the intense resentment of man's heart to exposure. Quite another matter for persons to die secretly, to be surrounded by love and care and all that human wisdom can provide, but being hanged is another matter altogether. Being hanged means that there is exposure before all ; and that such a one is unfit to be on the earth. I wonder whether we have come to that. In the book of Genesis, chapter 40, we read of the two men in prison ; one man, Pharaoh's baker, was unfit to live, and the only adequate punishment was that he should be hanged. The other man, the king's cup-bearer, was released by the king's favour to minister again to Pharaoh. The book of Genesis works that out for our instruction.

You see the beginning of the two men with Cain and Abel ; the same two men in character that we read of in Genesis 40. Think of what must have been in Eve's heart as she said, "I have

gotten a man from the Lord." What intense feelings must have been hers as the character of that man developed, and she learned he was a murderer. He was of the wicked one and slew his brother. That is one feature of the baker who was hanged ; another comes out in Ishmael. Again you have the two men viewed from another aspect in Ishmael and Isaac. Abraham says, "O that Ishmael might live." What must have been the feelings of Abraham's heart especially, and also of Sarah's, as the true character of Ishmael developed and became exposed. He is a mocker of Isaac. He has no place in his heart for Isaac—he mocks him, he is a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. What intense feelings must have been Abraham's as all these things came to light ! Then we have Esau and Jacob. Isaac loved Esau ; right up to his closing days he would have blessed Esau, but look at Esau ! A profane person, a man who puts no value on what is of God, a man who for a mess of pottage would sell his birth-right. Whether Esau valued it or not, it is there to be valued. I think Isaac comes to the setting aside of Esau afterwards, when he says of Jacob, "yea, and he shall be blessed." They appear again in Reuben and Joseph. The Spirit of God in the Chronicles puts them together, the first-born was Reuben, but the birth-right was Joseph's. When Reuben was born Leah said, "See, a son." Think

of her hopes. Think of what was in her heart as she looked upon her son. "See, a son," she said. Think of what must have then been in her soul and Jacob's too. "Reuben," he said, "thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." He had to learn that Reuben was not to be trusted. The most sacred relationship on earth could not be trusted to Reuben's care. These four men—Cain, Ishmael, Esau, and Reuben—give us features of the baker, who was hanged. The only thing to do with man after the flesh, that which is in every one of us, according to divine light, is to hang him. Not simply is he to die, but he is to be exposed before the gaze of all as one unfit to live, as one under condemnation, as one in the place of the curse.

Then the butler. His history runs through to Joseph. It begins with Abel, a man who to minister to God, would die if need be—righteous Abel. A man to whom to minister to God's pleasure was more to be desired than to live; bringing a more excellent sacrifice to God than Cain's. He appears again in Isaac. Isaac was one who was prepared by subjection to his father to travel with him to mount Moriah. Without any trace of rebellion Isaac was prepared to be laid on the altar and to be offered to God. He is continued in the butler, and is a man of whom Sarah said, "God has made

me laugh : all that hear will laugh with me." Think of the merriment that Isaac brought into the hearts of many. The one through whom the blessing of God would extend to every family. The butler appears again in Jacob. A man who loved the blessing of God, whatever may have been his wrong-doings in the way he sought it. Jacob was a man who loved the favour and blessing of God more than anything else. The history of this butler appears also in Joseph, the man who could be trusted. If Joseph stands out in one way more than another, it is as one who could be trusted. Reuben was unstable as water, but the birth-right was Joseph's as one who could be trusted in every position. Look at him ! You find he does not falter. He says to his master's wife, "how should I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" So the butler comes out of the prison still to be the king's cup-bearer. One loves to think of the Lord as the One who will always bring pleasure to God. The Lord Jesus Christ never ceased to minister to the heart of God.

In the book of Esther the same principle is worked out. Genesis is the beginning, the work of God coming to light in the souls of men individually. There is no tabernacle there, no sacrifices being brought to the tabernacle and the priesthood set up. Genesis expresses the work of God in us individually, and what can we bring if that is not there ? What do you think Cain could

have contributed to the tabernacle, what could Esau have brought, or Ishmael, or Reuben in his unjudged state? What kind of offerings would any of them have brought? The baker—what kind of element would he provide. The great lessons of Genesis must precede all, and when you come to the book of Esther, a day that corresponds now with the closing day, the day of brokenness, of lawlessness, of captivity, still these two men appear again, and the same issue is worked out. There is one man that must be hanged. What a man Haman was! A man descended from one who would have challenged the rights of the throne of God. He was a murderer, a Cain, an Ishmael, his hand against every man, a wild ass of a man, a profane person, a traitor. Every feature of the first man was there in Haman. The king's wrath is only pacified when his true character is exposed, when he is hanged, when the gallows that he made for Mordecai finds him on it as exposed to all in Ahasuerus' kingdom. The true character of Haman is manifest; whereas the true butler is there still in Mordecai. A man who would die before he would give up the rights of God; before subjection to the will of God should be set aside, Mordecai would die. Mordecai bowed not to Haman, the Agagite, an Amalekite, and so at the end of the book it is recorded that Haman is hanged and Mordecai exalted. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?"

In Luke 23 we have the same position again. There are the robbers and one admits that he deserves to be hanged. Think of him accepting it! "We indeed justly." He sees in his history what was like Cain, what was like Ishmael, a lawless man, wild ass of a man, he sees Esau in it; he has lived his life in disregard of God. He sees Reuben in it, wholly untrustworthy, a robber; but there is just this difference, he accepts the exposure. "We indeed justly." What an exposure! Not simply to die, but to be hanged! "One of the malefactors which were hanged." Someone else also was hanged, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." There is Someone else there. The dying robber finds One at his side. Scripture speaks of *the* cross, but it also speaks of *His* cross. Words that should vibrate in every heart—"His cross." It says in John, "he bearing his cross went forth." Not simply the cross; the cross may be connected with what man provided, but *His* cross. *Why His cross?* The passage I read in Colossians speaks of "the blood of his cross." *Why His cross?* The robber thinks of that when he says "this man hath done nothing amiss." *Why is He exposed?* *Why is He in the place of judgment, in the place of curse?* *Why is He put to open shame?* He accepted it. It was His cross as accepting it. There is only One who has been crucified for us; is there any wonder therefore that the Lord said, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth,

will draw all to me." But this He said signifying by what death He was about to die. The apostle Paul was prepared to accept the exposure. He says, "I am crucified with Christ." That is what I believe we need to realise if we are to contribute to the assembly, if we bring spiritual sacrifices, if we are rightly to be in the family of God. It must begin with this, we must accept the exposure. "I am crucified," Paul said, not literally, but in his judgment of himself, in his judgment of the flesh. He accepted that the crucifixion of Christ was his crucifixion. He says, "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He also tells the Romans that our old man has been crucified. I think it is very important, especially for those of us who are young, to accept it. The "old man" is in the singular, because he is in everyone of us, he is in you and in me. We are told to put off the old man with his deeds, Col. 3 : 9, but this will only be done as we realise that the only thing fitting is that he should be hanged. The exposure is accepted humbly, as the only fitting thing for that man. Now as having reached that judgment like the dying robber, what do I bring into the assembly ? If we think of that man as one who reached this judgment in his soul, what would he bring into the upper room if he had remained here ? What a holy love for Christ he would bring in ! What a judgment of sin also ! What lowliness would mark

him ! "We indeed justly." He had accepted that he should be hanged, but he found One who was crucified for him. How humbly he would come into the upper room, what a sense of mercy he would bring with him ! These are elements of great value in the upper room, for the individual saint to bring, a heart that delights in Christ and loves Him, a heart that has learned that the only thing that can be done with the flesh, the only thing adequate for what I am naturally, is to be hanged ; not simply to die and be buried, but to be hanged. When you get a believer on these lines, what an asset he is to the assembly !

One desired to present these few thoughts to us. I know very well that there is nothing we shrink from more than exposure. I believe most of us would rather die and be buried than be exposed, but the blessed Lord Jesus Christ has accepted the exposure. "He bearing his cross," and thus He has made peace. All that was against God, all that disturbed was settled then. He has made peace by the blood of His cross, so that we might be presented holy, unblamable, and irreprouvable in His sight as in attachment to Himself.

One would earnestly desire to be helped of the Lord to accept the meaning of the cross, the meaning of exposure, the full meaning of "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me. But this he said signifying by what death he was about to die."