



SECOND EDITION.

*“The Place
which the Lord
shall Choose.”*

BY

W. BRAMWELL DICK

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“The Place which the Lord shall Choose.”

Please read Deuteronomy,
Chapters xii. and xvi.



THE most cursory reader, and still more the diligent Bible student, must be impressed with the frequent recurrence of the words which we have selected as the title for this paper. We refer to them because “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. xv. 4). We trust we shall see as we proceed that as the Lord gave guidance to His people in that day, so He makes known His mind to “His own” in this day, and as there was “the place” then, so there is “the place” now.

Turning, then, to Deuteronomy xii., we find, in the first instance, that when the chil-

dren of Israel came into the land, their attitude to the existing religion thereof was to be one of uncompromising separation from it, and they were to be characterized by unflinching fidelity to Jehovah.

Their enemies had had "places" where they had "served their gods," but for them there should be only "The place which the Lord shall choose." They were not to choose for themselves; the Lord was to choose for them. The place which He should choose was to be the place of "His habitation" (verse 5). In other words, His house would be there, His Name would be there, and there was He to be known. They were warned against following the bent of their own will, or preferring what **they** might have chosen (verses 13, 14), and they were instructed that the place of the Lord's choice was to be the rallying point for them. Herein there is for us a lesson of the first importance.

We are living in days when the word "toleration" is the slogan of the religious world. It is said, in effect: "It does not really matter to what we belong, where, how,

or with whom we worship; we are all bound for the same place, and it will be all right in the end.” Then there are those who have got light beyond this, who look abroad and see many different companies of true Christians sincerely seeking to answer to the revealed truth of Holy Scripture, and they say: “They seem to be all pretty much alike, and it makes little difference where we are found.” Had an Israelite been tempted to argue thus, he would have heard a voice saying unto him: “Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee” (verses 13, 14). We judge that the Lord is no less careful, and our path is no less clear, in this day.

Why should this be insisted upon and repeated with such constant reiteration? We may be sure the Holy Spirit never indulges in needless repetition. If “the place” was to be “His habitation,” that meant that the Lord would find pleasure in surrounding

Himself with those whom He loved, and whom He had chosen to be "a special people unto Himself" (vii. 6—8). So now our blessed Lord loves to gather "His own" around Himself, and to take His place amongst them. We wish to give Him that joy; but where? "In the place which the Lord shall choose."

Verses 21 to 25 show the gracious and tender consideration of the Lord. Some might, from various legitimate causes, be prevented from reaching that place. Such might enjoy communion with Him where they were; but a limit was put upon that, the "holy things," the "burnt offerings," had to be offered at "the place which the Lord shall choose." There are devoted saints in these days who are bedridden, or in other ways are prevented from being gathered with their fellow-believers, and such may know the sweetness of communion where they are. It is, however, when assembled together around the Lord Himself, that, as nowhere else, His love is apprehended, His preciousness is appreciated, and true Spirit-begotten worship rises through Him to God the

Father's ear. Some say, "We can enjoy the Lord at home; we can worship in our own room." We have known those who living in a spot where the Lord had "much people" preferred isolation to fellowship: for such, verses 26—28 have a solemn admonition.

In chapter xvi., there is again the injunction to adhere to "the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His Name in" (verses 5, 6). This chapter may be summed up by verses 16 and 17. The males were looked upon representatively. The three feasts were the outstanding feasts in the Israelitish calendar, and have a very real significance for us. As we consider them we are at once reminded of the Lord's Supper, and of that which the Lord would have us to learn from that sacred feast. "The feast of unleavened bread" is inseparably connected with "the passover." We begin with redemption. So in the Lord's Supper we remember a dead Christ. We recall the settling of the great sin question, the accomplishment of the mighty redemptive work; we see how God's glory has been maintained, the majesty of His throne has been upheld,

the righteousness of His character has been vindicated, the love of His heart has been revealed, the basis has been laid for all His purposes to be fulfilled, and our adorable Lord has secured for Himself that upon which His love was set. There is, however, the "unleavened bread" connected with this, and in this chapter it is called "the bread of affliction" (verse 3). Never must we forget that it was our sins that made that work a necessity. This will prevent flippancy in manner and in language when gathered to remember Him.

"The feast of tabernacles" points on to Israel's glorious future; it indicates the ultimate triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. In eating the Lord's Supper we contemplate His victory in all its fulness—not simply as applying to Israel, but as that which will be consummated by His delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . "that God may be all in all" (I Cor. xv. 24—28). We announce His death "till He come" (I Cor. xi. 26), which means not only that this precious remembrance will go on "till He come," but that we have in view His com-

ing to put the top stone to the work, the foundation of which He laid at the cross (Rev. xxi. 1—8).

The central feast was “the feast of weeks.” That is figurative of Pentecost, and speaks to us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in God’s house, and in the hearts of God’s children. When we eat the Lord’s Supper the Holy Spirit carries our thoughts backward, leads us into the ever deepening apprehension of all that the work of Christ has secured for God and for us; and He carries our minds forward to the coming day of glory. When He has His own way with us, we cannot be “empty”; we shall give to the Lord of that which He has given to us; we will realize that it is a “feast,” and our souls will rejoice. Surely all this is a great incentive for us to seek the place of the Lord’s choice, to know

THE PLACE AND THE PURPOSE.

Shall we now turn to the last book in the Old Testament (Malachi iii. 16, 17)? A thousand years had elapsed between the time of the instructions which we have been con-

sidering, and the period herein indicated. Alas! ruin had come in. The people who professed His Name had turned away from the Lord, and so completely had they been lulled to sleep by the enemy that they were unconscious of their deplorable condition. It seemed as if all had gone, and there was nothing left for God. Yet amid the darkness there is a glimmer of light. **“Then”**—with all the emphasis upon the **“then”**—**“Then** they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.” It is doubtful if the word **“often”** should be there; it is omitted in the Revised Version, and also in the French Edition of the excellent translation by the late J. N. Darby. It would appear to have been characteristic of those that feared the Lord to speak one to another. They may have been few, very likely they were feeble, and probably they were despised, but they **“feared the Lord,”** they **“thought upon His Name,”** and so grateful was this to Him that He **“hearkened.”** He stooped to listen—**“and heard;”** He ordered the **“book of remembrance”** to be written, and He said, **“they shall be Mine.”**

Closely connected with this is Luke ii. 25-38. Fifteen hundred years or thereabouts, had rolled by since that of which we read in Deuteronomy. There had been from the day that Malachi wrote no intercourse between God and the mass of His people. The failure, to all outward appearance, was complete. Two are named in these verses. They were in "the place," and they revered "the Name" of the Lord. Had they been asked, "Why do you cling to the place?" would they not have replied, "Because it is the place which the Lord has chosen to place His Name there"? They "feared the Lord," they "thought upon His Name," nor were they without companions, for Anna "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." "The secret of the Lord" was with them; they were waiting for the first coming of Christ, and when He came they constituted the true worshippers. All this confirms the fact that God never leaves Himself without a witness.

When we think of the present-day application of that which we have been considering, our thoughts turn to that very familiar but

priceless word in Matthew xviii. 20: “For where two or three are gathered together in [or unto] My Name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Here we still have “the place”—“**where**”—and the Name—“**My Name.**” Whereas in that which we have been considering we have **the place and the purpose**, here we have

THE PLACE, THE PERSON AND THE PURPOSE.

May not our blessed Lord have had in view a day of declension and departure such as the present when He uttered these words? They are equally true of two or three hundred, or two or three score, but He came down to the minimum when He said “two or three.” Why do we see here and there two or three passing by grand religious edifices, not mingling with the crowds who resort thither, not invoking the aid of college-bred men, not adopting a form of service, but coming together in the simplest possible way? They may suffer in work, in business, and in other

ways. They may be lightly esteemed even by those who profess faith in Christ. What is the secret? Is it not that the Lord has attracted them to Himself, that His Name is the only Name that they seek to own, that they desire to respond to His gathering call, that they wish to give Him the joy that He seeks in this way, and that they long to have the joy of His company.

Some person may say, "That sounds all very nice, but in the confusion that exists can we insist that there is a place?" There was in the olden times, when they came into the land with flying colours, and all was well with them; there was in Malachi's day when the failure was great and the sky was black; there was in the day of Simeon and Anna when the night was at its darkest. There was also in the day of the Assembly's pristine freshness and purity; there was in the day of failure at Corinth, and, as we have already remarked, our Lord's word recorded in Matthew xviii. 20, lead us to expect that there will ever be a place where His Name shall be placed, and where He Himself shall be found.

Does some one ask—**where**? We venture to reply that if we are moved by the affection, and actuated by the desire of the inquirer in the Song of Solomon, we shall learn where. “Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, **where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon**” (i. 7). When we find the Person we shall reach the place, and we shall find Him not by our intellect, but as our feet follow our heart, the heart being set upon Him and Him alone.

In closing we invite attention to the last book in the New Testament (Rev. iii. 7—13). If we accept the review of the seven Churches in Asia as being a survey of the entire Church period from the day of Pentecost until the coming of the Lord, may we not assume that amid the corruption of Romanism (Thyatira), the deadness of Protestantism (Sardis), and the utter ruin of Christendom generally, (Laodicea), Philadelphia stands out as representing those who will be found just before the Lord's return, who fear Him, who think upon His Name, who speak of Him, and who will be found watching when He returns? They are marked by “a little power,” but the

Lord takes account of them, and He is able to say to them, "Thou . . . hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name" (verse 8). To them, Himself, His Name, and His Word are everything, and if despised and looked down upon here, He assures them that He will yet demonstrate that they are the objects of His love (verse 9). We may be sure such will not escape the notice of the enemy. If he can induce them to give up, and to go with the majority, how glad will he be. If he can make the road seem rough, the night of Christ's absence long, and the difficulties great, some may drop out by the way. To counteract this there comes the encouraging word of the Lord Himself: "I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (verse 11, N.Tr.). No need to say, "Behold." They are expecting Him, waiting and watching for Him. This hope it is that has separated them from the world in every shape and form, and that has called them to the outside place in company with Himself.

Only a few more steps, only a little more roughing, and then travelling days are done;

He Himself shall be our Object, His Name our boast, His love our theme for ever and ever.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter?

1. The Lord calls us to entire separation from the world and its religious systems.

2. He has chosen a place where He has placed His Name, where He seeks for Himself the joy of calling His own together around Himself.

3. His Name is to be the only rallying point, His Name is to be the bond, and His Word the only recognized authority.

4. His fear ever before them, love for His Name filling their heart, those who are attracted to Him will find delight in speaking of Him to one another.

5. No matter how dark the night, how difficult the path, or how small the number, such can at all times count upon His support.

6. The Holy Spirit is here to guide such into and maintain such in the path of His will.

7. The promise of His speedy return will encourage such to be loyal to His Word and true to His Name.

We are persuaded that in these closing moments of the Church's history, nearly twenty centuries after its inception, the Lord would seek to revive this in the hearts of His own, so that there may be a real gathering out to Himself now. Surely we all desire to answer to His call, to have His approval here, and His smile when we see Him face to face. May it be so for His Name's sake.

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