

THE

FATHER'S HOUSE,

THE HOUSE OF MANY MANSIONS.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John xiv. 2, 3.)

THERE is something so pure and holy in the thought of the Father's house, as well as so lovely and beautiful—something that the believer can think of with a calm and holy joy, in a way that he cannot any other scene; for there is no other spot which he can contemplate that has not been defiled by sin. Satan has been everywhere beside, and left his trail behind him. Even the heavens are not pure in God's sight. Satan has been there, and still will have access, till the appointed moment come. (Job i. 6, 7; Rev. xii. 9, 10.) But his feet have never soiled even the threshold of the Father's house. No spot nor stain has ever been there, nor ever will be. It is God's especial dwelling place, where all is light and love.

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Therefore we can well understand how very bright and cheering the prospect must have been to the Lord Jesus when He was about to leave this world, notwithstanding the scene of suffering and death, that was before Him: the knowing that He was going back to the Father's house—that happy home which He knew so well; and that He should have those He loved, with Him there for ever: washed from their sins in His own blood, and made in every way like Himself; His Father their Father, and His God their God. So that there would be no hindrance to the enjoyment of each other's company, through one eternal day. (John xiv. 1, 2, 3-28; xx. 17.)

But His disciples could not enter into these things at that time, therefore they were in sorrow because He was going to leave them; and He felt for them exceedingly, and did all He could to comfort them. He seemed to forget His own sorrow in thinking of theirs. And then it was that He spoke to them of His Father's house, and told them that there were many mansions there, and that He was going to prepare a place for them. Therefore they were not to let their heart be troubled while He was away, because He would come back again and receive them to Himself, that where He was, there they might be also.

He well knew what a world He was going to leave them in, and how many thousand things there would be calculated to trouble them during His absence. But they were not to let it be so, but to think of Him, and where He was gone, and that they would soon see Him again, and be with Him never to part any more.

And how touching were His words, when He

said, "if it were not so, I would have told you." He would not hold out hopes to them, which they would never realise, nor give them promises, and then disappoint them. He would not do as the world did, therefore they were not to let their heart be troubled, neither were they to be afraid. For though He was going away, yet He would come again.

And not only so, but He would send them another Comforter, in every way like Himself, to be with them all the time that He was gone: even the spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father; and He would guide and keep them all their journey through. He would supply His place, and be to them everything which He Himself had been. He would never leave them, nor forsake them.

This is true to-day, and how blessed it is to know it. How it frees our soul from every anxious thought, let things be down here as they may. For what have we to fear, having such a gracious, unchangeable One to be always with us, making it His joy and delight to care for the little flock which the Lord Jesus left behind Him in this world? Knowing too that the door of the Father's house is always open to us, and that it is the present home of our souls, where we can resort to continually, in peace and joy, and be sure of a Father's smile and a hearty welcome: far away from the turmoil and confusion which is going on all around; and where we can breathe freely, and be at rest, becauset here is no taint of sin or corruption there in any way whatever—even the holiest, which the believer has liberty to enter at all times by the blood of Christ (Heb. x. 19; 1 John

i. 7); and where alone he can be truly happy; knowing that it is his place and portion and that He Himself will be there too very shortly.

How exceeding precious this is. For where else can our spirits turn? If we look within, at our own hearts, all is darkness and confusion; and if around, there is sin and Satan on every hand; and if in the heavenly places, Satan is still there, and therefore it is a place of conflict, and not of rest. (Eph. vi. 12.) But when in spirit we soar above it all, and enter the Father's house, then we feel ourselves at home in His unchanging love, and because Jesus is there, and therefore we can be there too, with all the joy and liberty of children, knowing that His blood cleanseth from all sin.

The Apostle Paul was privileged with a visit there personally, before he had done with the wilderness. He was caught up into the third heaven, and heard things which it is not possible for a man to utter. (2 Cor. xii.) This helped him very much in his labours for Christ, and gave him great joy in looking on to the time when he should be there altogether.

Now if we look into the household of Abraham, I think we shall see something very similar, as far as it goes, to that which the Lord Jesus referred to, when He spoke of His Father's house as the house of many mansions, or properly many abodes, for that is what is really meant;* and in the household

* The word "mansion" in the second verse of the fourteenth of John, and the word "abode" in the twenty third verse, are both the same in the original, only translated differently. And O, how precious this is! The Lord Jesus had been telling them that He was going to prepare a mansion or abode for them in His Father's house up there,

of Abraham we see what these mansions or abodes are. First Abraham and Isaac had their own proper abode there. Then Eliezer, the steward of the house, had his abode. The upper servants had theirs, and the under servants had theirs also.

Now this is a little picture, as far as any earthly scene can shew it forth, of what the Lord Jesus referred to when He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions," that is, abodes. First, there are the angels, God's servants which do His bidding. (Heb. i. 13, 14.) They, we may say, have their abode in the Father's house according to their different degrees. Then there are the Old Testament saints, God's friends, far above angels, in much greater nearness to Him than they, and they also have their abode there. And now in this dispensation, since the Lord Jesus died, and rose again, this interval between the cross and the glory, there is a bride being gathered, a beautiful bride for Christ, who will be adorned with all His beauty and all His loveliness, and made in every way meet for Himself (Phil. iii. 20, 21); a company which He hath chosen to share His glory (John xvii. 22, 23), and upon whom His affections were set from all eternity. And it is to this company as His bride that He says, "In my Father's house *are many mansions* [or abodes]: if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to *prepare a place for you.*"

and then He added, that if they kept His word and walked properly, both He and His Father would come and make their mansion or abode with them down here, even with each of them individually. So that they should not have to wait until that happy day came, before they knew this fellowship and love. (John xiv. 23.)

It is as the Bridegroom that the Lord Jesus here presents Himself to His poor sorrowing suffering ones, which He was about to leave behind Him for a time. John the Baptist had previously pointed Him out in the same way in the third chapter, when He said, "He that hath the bride, is the Bridegroom." It was as such that John saw Him, and perhaps he was the very first who ever had even a glimpse of Him in this way. But John saw something else, he also saw that there was a bride coming for Him, a heavenly bride, and that he himself was a friend of the Bridegroom, and his joy was full on account of it. (John iii. 29.) And O how lovely and beautiful is the thought that it is in this happy way that the Lord Jesus is gone to prepare a place, and as such He will come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. So that it is not the mansion (the abode) that He places before His people, neither is it the Father's house merely, beautiful and glorious as it is, but it is *to Himself that we are going*, and it is *Himself* that we shall *be with*, through one eternal day. (1 Thess. iv. 17.)

Now if we look again into the house of Abraham, I think we shall see this very beautifully, though faintly shewn forth. Isaac is heir to all that Abraham has, but he must in figure pass through death and resurrection, before he can receive his bride. God told Abraham to go to a certain mountain, and offer him up there upon an altar, and Abraham went, and did as God had bidden him. He laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, he then stretched forth his hand and took a knife to slay him. But the angel of the Lord

called to Abraham out of heaven, and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw a ram caught in a thicket, by his horns." And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up to God a burnt offering, instead of Isaac his son. Thus Abraham received him back again, from the dead, in a figure. (Heb. xi. 19.)

How very painful it must have been to Abraham thus to bind his son and lay him on the altar, though there was a substitute found, and he was spared the doing the thing itself. But O, wonder of wonders, it was not so with God. In His love to us He did not spare His own Son. No substitute could be found for Him (Luke xxii. 42); but He must pass through death, with all its untold gloom. As it is written, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord." (Zech. xiii. 7.) Thus He, the pure and spotless Lamb of God, was taken with wicked hands, and crucified and slain.

In that dreadful hour, God made Him our sin-bearer, and upon Him was laid the iniquity of us all. Either He, the sinless One, must die, or we must be shut out of God's presence for ever. As there was no other way by which He could have received one poor sinner to Himself, He must bear their judgment or they must be kept at a distance in hopeless despair. Therefore He willingly gave Himself up, and the guiltless died in the place of the guilty, and was buried, and the third day He rose again. And it is by His precious blood alone, that sinners have been saved, from Adam downward, and so will it be to the end of time. No one can ever enter the gates of heaven,

only on the ground of what that precious One did on the cross of Calvary.

In the offering up of Isaac, Abraham was the great actor in the scene, painful as it was. What he must have felt as a loving father, in thus preparing to slay his son! And in the death of Christ, God was the great actor also, and what must He have felt in giving up His beloved Son to shame and death! the One that had been His delight before this world was. But such is God's love to poor man. *Wonderful*, and yet *most true*. Therefore the Lord Jesus could say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And again, "Lo, I come to do Thy will O God;" "a body hast Thou prepared me." And He died as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. But He is now alive again for evermore, and hath all power given unto Him, both in heaven and in earth. And the Holy Ghost is sent down here, to gather poor sinners to Him, by giving them, who believe in His name, life everlasting.

This is what is now going on in the world. Day after day, they are being gathered, and washed from their sins in His own blood, made whiter than snow before God. And when the last one is gathered in, then the Lord Jesus will fulfil His *parting promise in coming and taking them to His home of glory* for ever.

This was in part very feebly though beautifully shewn forth in the history of Isaac. Isaac in figure having passed through death and resurrection, then Eliezer was sent into a far-off country, to find a bride for him: and he found her in the person of Rebecca. She left her home, and her

kindred, and went with Eliezer, who conducted her through a long toilsome journey. Day after day she had to traverse the sands of the desert, but every day brought her nearer and nearer to the house of Abraham, and the last day's journey came. Then it was that Isaac went out and met her, and brought her home to his father's house. And when there, it would not have been seemly to have given her a place among the servants of that household, however kind and good they might have been. That would have been altogether out of place. She was come to be the bride of him who was heir to it all, and therefore there must be an especial abode for her, one suited to her position.

In like manner, only in a more holy and glorious way, the Lord Jesus having died and risen again, the Holy Ghost is sent down into this far-off country, not seen by man, but as really present as if He were; and He is gathering out of this world a bride for Christ, composed of poor sinners who know themselves to be such, and who are through grace brought to believe in His name. And each one individually has an especial place, and forms an especial part, of that glorious company. And the Holy Ghost is conducting them through this scene day after day; and when the last one is brought in, then the Lord Jesus will descend into the clouds, and call them up to meet Him in the air. He will then conduct them to His Father's house.

And when there, it would not be consistent to give them a place with the servants of that house—the angels—however bright and glorious they may be; nor yet with His friends, the Old Testament saints, however exalted their position. She

had been chosen out of the world, and brought into this heavenly relationship, far above angels, and therefore there must be a distinct place for her, one suited to the position into which she had been brought. Hence the Lord Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many abodes"—"I go to prepare a place for you;" as it were, a fresh apartment. And at the appointed time, He will come and take her to Himself for ever.

Therefore this, His parting promise of coming again, was the one joyful hope of the early Christians; and it kept them bright and happy, with their loins girded and their lights burning, notwithstanding the very great trials through which they had to pass. When they rose in the morning they thought perhaps they might see His face before the evening; and when they laid their heads on their pillows at night, they did not know but they might hear His voice and be with Him before the morning; and so time passed swiftly and sweetly on, and usefully too, for they sought to catch every moment as it came, and use it for Him.

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians we are told the manner in which He will come. He will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, will be caught up together with them. (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) They will not go before us, neither shall we go before them, but we shall all go up together, in one company. Then it is that He will conduct us to that home of glory with joy and gladness.

O what a happy day this will be. Our joy will indeed be great, but His will be much greater. He

will then have the desire of His heart, the joy that was set before Him, and for which He endured the cross, and despised the shame. He will indeed see of the travail of His soul, and will be satisfied. And we shall be satisfied too, because we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

This busy world will still go on with its plans and purposes after the church is gone : marrying, and giving in marriage. They will be saying, Peace and safety, when all of a sudden, the Lord will come in glory, and put a stop to all their doings, and banish the wicked from off the earth. He will then set up His own kingdom, and reign in righteousness. And all the world will see His glory. (Habak ii. 14.)

Oh what a bright and glorious future awaits all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. God in His love has already brought them into relationship with Himself, made us His children by faith in Christ Jesus. "But the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John iii. 1, 2.) They do not know that we are on our way to the Father's house ; neither do they know the eternal love and joy that await us there. They see us passing in and out among them and we have to do with them, and they with us, but they see not our glorious destiny. They do not know that we may be called away at any moment ; caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and thus change earth for heaven, this world for eternal glory.

When this happy moment comes, we may as usual be fully occupied, each of us doing our little daily task—one in one way, and another in another, when in the twinkling of an eye we shall be missed, for the Lord Jesus will have come, and we shall

be gone. (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) He Himself rose as the firstfruits of them that slept. Therefore as He rose, so His sleeping ones will rise also. They will leave their grave clothes behind them as He did, for they will never need them any more, as there will be no death in that blest abode where they go. They will have done with sin and all its consequences for ever. This vile body the Lord Jesus will change, and fashion it like unto His glorious body. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

Thus, when the bride has left this scene and reached the Father's house, and everything put straight, each one rewarded according to his works, then the marriage will take place. All the heavenly hosts will give glory to God on account of it. (Rev. xix.) They had seen with gladness the downfall of that outward professing thing, that false bride, who had decked herself so gloriously in the world, and who was of Satan, not of God, and now they will rejoice that the marriage of the Lamb is come, and that His wife hath made herself ready.

This scene had been a desert to her, and as regards the world she had passed through it lonely and sorrowful, because the One who loved her was absent, and despised; therefore she could not make herself at home where He was not. She felt herself a stranger, and all was dark and dreary because He was away. But now the scene has changed, for she has reached her home, the Father's house, and the nuptial day is come, and her joy is full. Her loneliness is over, her days of sorrow are passed, for the wilderness is done with for ever. Sin is gone, and everything connected with it, and she is with Him whose face she so longed to see.

She now knows the full meaning of that sweet promise, which had been such a comfort to her as she passed along : " I will come again, and receive you unto *myself*, that *where I am, there you may be also*."

" And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."* She had not been idle while her Lord was absent, spending her days in slothful despondency, neither had she been doing her own will, pleasing her own self. And now it is seen in this beautiful marriage dress in which she is arrayed. This fine linen, clean and white, which though wrought in such weakness and feebleness, and in the midst of evil too, yet in that day it will be seen pure and spotless, through His precious blood; seen too as the nuptial garment in which she will be presented to the Bridegroom, and which she has been unconsciously weaving day after day during the days of her pilgrimage. These righteousnesses of the saints, poor as they now seem, yet they are the work of God in the soul (Phil. ii. 13), though so feebly wrought out by us; therefore they will in that day, be indeed bright and glorious; and will be looked at by her with

* This word righteousness, or properly *righteousnesses*, is in the plural, and answers to that in Isaiah lxiv. 6, " All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." And so they are, when they are used as Adam did the fig-leaves, to cover himself with in the presence of God. But when our souls are saved, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are brought into this heavenly position, and good works follow immediately, as being the fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in us; therefore God can accept them: and without these good works, faith is dead, being alone. (Titus iii. 8; James ii. 14—26.)

wonder and amazement, as well as with everlasting joy and gladness.

The friends of the Bridegroom will also be called to the marriage, and blessed, eternally blessed will they be. No tongue can describe the glories that await them as being the delight of Him whose they are, and by whose precious blood they were redeemed to God. But the bride will have her own peculiar joy—that which another never will be able to enter into, as being one with Him, who is heir to it all. The One who loved her, and washed her from her sins in His own blood—bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh (Eph. v.); entering into every joy, and every interest, which belong to Him, through one eternal day; while she will also worship Him, as her Lord and Saviour, the one to whom she owes her all, and who is everything to her—the One who was rich, yet for her sake became poor, that she through His poverty might be rich. Therefore He will be all her joy and all her delight for evermore. She will remember, above all things, His love in dying for her, knowing that had He not done it, she must have remained desolate and lost in that far-off condition, where hope never could come.

The last thing we read of her is in the eternal state, in the new heavens and the new earth; after the millennial reign is over and all things are made new. Then again she is seen, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband. Not as having a place in the Father's house now, but more in the character of the Father's house itself—the holy city, the New Jerusalem—the city that has no

need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And she is still seen, with all the beauty and loveliness of the marriage day. (Rev. xxi. 2.)

Everything on earth loses its freshness; however beautiful and lovely it may be, it gets to its full, and then at once begins to fade. But not so with this heavenly bride: hers will be unsullied light and glory, ever unfolding itself in the presence of God and the Lamb; like a beautiful rose, now in the bud, but, as it were, never will be full blown; but she will go on blooming out, in all His rich fragrance and beauty, more and more, throughout the countless ages of eternity.

At this time the tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither will there be any more pain, for the former things will have passed away. (Rev. xxi. 1-9.) To the believer, death will be for ever swallowed up in victory. And God in these eternal ages, will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 7.) It will then be seen that believers are loved of God, as Christ is loved. (John xvii. 23.) It is really so now, but the world does not know it. God even now hath called us to His eternal kingdom and glory, by Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. ii. 12; 1 Peter v. 10.) Then it will be manifested in a way in which it could not have been even in the millennium, because then all rule and authority and power had not been put down. Neither had the kingdom been delivered up to God, even the

Father, that God may be all in all. Then, it will be. (1 Cor. xv. 26—28.)

The earth and all the works that are therein will have been burned up. (2 Peter iii.) Not annihilated, but melted up, as it were, and remodelled and made new. And there will be no more sea. It will be a new state of things altogether, for nothing on earth could now exist without the sea. Not a blade of grass could live without it; we depend on it for every drop of moisture we have. Sin now dwells on the earth, but then it will be for ever gone, and righteousness will dwell in its stead.

Oh the blessedness of being in Christ Jesus now! of seeing the helplessness of our poor helpless and worthless selves in every way. And on the other hand, the joy of receiving Him as our present and eternal all—the One in whom every blessing we have is centred, either in this world, or in that which is to come.

May we who know in any little measure the blessedness of it, be led to know it more and more, and be kept this little while very true and faithful to His name.

H. T.



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