

The
WAR
of the
LORD.

Notes of Lectures by
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The War of the Lord.

THE LORD AS A MAN OF WAR.

I THESSALONIANS I. 9, 10; II. 18; V. 9, 23.

EXODUS I. 11; III. 2-6; IV. 21-24; XIV. 5; XV. 3.

IN these addresses I have it before me to seek to present what I feel to be a very important subject, as having its bearing on our present position, and that is what one may venture to call the war of the Lord. We may have to touch on it under several different aspects, but it is the same war, and the One who conducts it is the Lord. Lest any should think it is not important to know anything about war, I would draw your attention to Judges iii. 2: "That the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof." That is only by the way to shew the general principle. The literal idea of that verse is that "the children of Israel might know war by learning it, at the least those who before had known nothing thereof." If any are desirous to

find where I secure such an expression as "the war of the Lord," you could look at your leisure at Numbers xxi. 14, where you will find the expression: "the book of the wars of the Lord." The Lord was taking up His inheritance in His people, and this involved the dispossession of the usurper—and hence war ensues.

To-night we have a particular conflict before us, which I propose to take up from the early chapters of the book of Exodus, where what is typically set forth in the Lord's conflict with Pharaoh has its counterpart for us in 1 Thessalonians. I shall ask your attention to *four distinct thoughts* with regard to the subject, because in examining a subject we need to have our minds controlled by the Spirit, and to have our thoughts in order so as to get the true bearings of it in relation to the whole circle of truth. We might consider

First, how *God* is presented;

Secondly, what character the enemy assumes in each phase of the war;

Thirdly, the point of conflict in each; and

Fourthly, endeavour to find what are the moral results brought about in the people of God.

Having said this, we have perhaps got ground laid which will enable us to examine

the first great aspect of the war of the Lord in the particular scripture before us. We shall find that God is presented as a Man of war: "Jehovah is a man of war." I do not propose to touch upon the teaching of Exodus in regard simply to what is past; it contains the history of an actual people, but I desire to use it to shew how it exactly suits us at the present moment in relation to the testimony of the Lord here on earth—its present bearing and how it brings into view the activities of Satan, and at the same time how the power of God helps on our behalf in every exigency. Scripture is always able to help us at any given moment, however complicated things may appear outwardly.

Now the first point we have come to is this: the Lord is a Man of war. Connected with that presentation of Himself we shall see that He is the living God, the God of resurrection. As to the second thought—the aspect under which the enemy presents himself—that would come out in this book in the person of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh as representing the prince of this world. The point of conflict is God's right to the service of His people—of His first-born, and the moral result that we shall

see brought about with the people is that they appreciate the blood of the Lamb, and the new ground on to which God brings them—resurrection ground.

Having covered our ground to start with, we may go over it a little in detail. God has a redeemed people here, and the ground of their redemption is the atoning sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This book shews that very clearly, and indicates the eternal basis on which God acts in redeeming a people to Himself. It held good for Israel then, and it stands good for God's people to-day.

The people were in bondage to that which is a picture of this present world, not exactly in its religious character, but in its glory and magnificence after the flesh. They were in bondage to that system and to its prince, a king who knew not Joseph. God was about to lift them out of that and to transfer them by His mighty power to His own glorious system, to new and holy ground where they could be before Him for His pleasure. That will in brief shew you what God will effect and does effect at the present moment. What we have sorrowfully to recognise is that though all Christians belong to God's glorious and holy order of things, they are sometimes, without knowing

it, in bondage to the system of this present evil world and to the power of its magnificence. Now if God's redeemed people are content to remain there, Satan will have no fault to find with them. They may be as religious as they please, but if they are willing to contribute to the glory of Satan's world in any shape or form, to its progress, philanthropy or reformation, Satan will not quarrel with them. With regard to Israel, we learn from chapter i. 11: "They built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." That is exactly what a vast number of Christians are doing to-day. They are not at all aware of it perhaps, but they are, directly or indirectly, contributing to the magnificence and glory of Satan's world. They may think that they are studying the good of men, but in joining themselves to the world's philanthropy and religion and reformative measures they are building up the treasure cities of the prince of this world. I should like to put it to you: Are you doing so? I am absolutely certain that those whom Satan is most anxious to gain for his service are Christians. None suit his end so well. He will adorn his system by this means and he will give a false glory to it; but it is a solemn fact that every Christian who joins with the

religious order of things in building up this world is doing it the most serious injury, for he is giving it a false impression as to its true character and investing it with a glory which does not belong to it.

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In Exodus iii. we find the burning bush, by nature most easily burned and yet not consumed. God was identified in His power with that bush. If we read the allusions in the New Testament to the bush we shall find that it refers to the God of resurrection. (See Luke xx. 37, 38.) Doubtless in this miraculous presentation of Himself to Moses God was displaying Himself as the living God. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob had passed away for men, but not for God, and God here shews that He is about to intervene in resurrection power to lift His people out of their bondage to the prince of this world, transferring them on to new ground where they might serve Him. For us, to-day, it is in the spirit of our minds; for them, it was in actuality. Moses was to remove his shoes from off his feet for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. God there shews that He was about to provide for His people new ground which they might occupy, ground unchallengeable by the enemy, ground that was to be cleared

through the death of Christ and was to be made available for His people through redemption and in the light of resurrection. There can be no doubt as to that; we are all familiar with the fact that the Red Sea sets forth in type the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moses was to stand upon holy ground.

When the Lord announces His determination to send Moses forth, He tells him: "I AM THAT I AM." He is the self-existing One, changeless through all the ages. Then He provides Moses with three signs: they are the weapons with which he is furnished for his mission. The first was a rod, a sign of authority. He cast it upon the ground and it became a serpent, and Moses fled from before it. We may see in this that authority in judgment belongs to God, but the government of the world as far as we can see has been usurped by Satan. That is, power has become Satanic; and Moses fled from before it. It is well before we set out to face the foe that we should really estimate his power. In Luke xiv. the Lord speaks of the king consulting whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand, and as a result when he assesses the power of the enemy, instead of fleeing before it he capitulates.

That is just what has taken place in Christendom. God shews Moses that He will take back to Himself the power that Satan has usurped and is using to his own end, and God will shortly bruise Satan under our feet. It is Moses who takes the serpent and it becomes a rod in his hand. We can see in this that all power is under the control of Christ.

The next sign is the leprous hand. God was teaching Moses the true condition of the people of Israel by nature—incurable sinners—but he had to learn it in his own breast; and in the third sign, that of water poured out and becoming blood, we view God's power to deal with every foe and to turn all the sources from which man now draws his refreshment to death-dealing judgment.

Moses is thus sent forth, fully equipped from God's armoury, and fitted with the word to speak to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let my son go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Whatever message Moses was to carry to Pharaoh that message must be made good in Moses, and in the people too. Here an important incident comes in, and it

s the first time in which we see Jehovah in a certain way as a Man of war, not against Pharaoh, remarkably enough, but against Moses. The Lord sought to slay him. What could that mean? "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." (Chap. iv. 24.) The truth must be made good in the soul of the leader of the people before it is put into effect against the enemy, and Moses was to learn the bearing of death as to his own firstborn before he could rightly carry the message of death to Pharaoh as to his firstborn. That is a very important principle. God will have reality in those who take up His testimony here, and the message that they carry (the testimony) against the common foe must be made real in them. It is set forth in the words of Zipporah: "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me," shewing that the relationship of the saints to Christ is by blood. The moral result of this is wrought out later in the people in connection with the blood of the lamb. It was that in which their firstborn was preserved, and it was in the acceptance of the blood of the lamb that Israel, as identified with Moses, was brought into the moral results of this war of the Lord.

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But we must pass on. The present position the prince of this world is taking up is that he seeks to retain God's saints to build his treasure cities, thus robbing them—robbing God, shall we say?—of His portion in His people. Alas! Satan has succeeded. Yet the true character of Christianity abides for God. Still it remains true that God's saints have turned to Him from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, their deliverer from the coming wrath. Idols are all around to-day; the whole world-system is idolatrous, and men are pursuing money, pleasure, power, their idols, more effective perhaps than of wood and stone. But the point of attraction for the Thessalonians lay in God—they turned to God from idols.

We may again refer, before proceeding, to the character of this war. The execution of judgment was against all the gods of Egypt. (Exo. xii. 12.) The plagues brought to bear upon Pharaoh were no mere arbitrary plagues; they were selected and directed against the very gods of Egypt. It must ever be so; God will wage war upon that which holds His people captive. Now as this proceeds we see the character of the opposition that marked Pharaoh. It

was in relation to the service of the people. Plague after plague fell upon him, but in his inveterate hostility and hatred to the claim of God he ever sought to hold and entangle the people in this present world.

In the *four particular hindrances* to the exodus of the people presented by Pharaoh, as he still claims the service of the people for himself, we can measure the present activity of the prince of this world to retain God's saints here for the aggrandisement of his own glory. We shall turn to those four instances, and the enemy being defeated in each of them, we shall see how he gives them permission to depart, only to once more seek to recapture them.

“And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said,

Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

(Chap. viii. 25.) Scourge after scourge had fallen upon Pharaoh until the plague of flies had come, and then he apparently begins to relent, with these words, which suggest a response to Jehovah's demand. He would allow them to sacrifice to God. But where? In the land! That was the first hindrance presented by Satan to the thought of God for His people. Thus we read in 1 Thessalonians ii.: “Satan hindered us.” It i

exactly what he is doing to-day, and he who is with God can see that Satan is behind the hindrance. The principle involved is this: be as religious as you like (you only add to the adornment of the world in that way), but do not leave the world. "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." Moses answered, "We shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God." The abomination of the Egyptians was cattle, and the latter provided the victims which were used to serve God, typifying the death of Christ. The death of Christ in its atoning value is abomination to the world, and if we are true to the death of Christ we shall find it impossible to serve God in the world. And yet that is blandly proposed here. How many Christians have, alas, succumbed to it! The heart of the unregenerate man—christianised, elevated—hates Christ as much as ever. We cannot serve God in the land. Blessed it is to see that in the war of the Lord there is no compromise. Christ makes no compromise. If He has taken up the place of Deliverer from coming wrath for His people, He never makes terms with the enemy. Here too Moses absolutely refuses every blandishment and offer of this world.

We come now to the second hindrance of

Satan—chap. viii. 28. It is a particularly subtle one. They were to have a licence to leave the world, in a sense, and to go into the wilderness—

“Only ye shall not go very far away.”

Now that is where Christendom has capitulated. They have said: That is good enough for us; we have our permission, and are prepared to accept the limitation. We can give God His portion, yet keep in touch with the world! Have you made terms there with the foe? Satan will have no quarrel with you on that ground; he has no quarrel with Christendom. Yet a worldly Christianity is nauseous to Christ. Every principle seen here works in our hearts naturally. One may say in the main that Christians publicly compromised at that particular point: “Only ye shall not go very far away.” It is the end of all distinctness of separation to God. Moses made no compromise.

More plagues come upon Pharaoh and then we get his third hindrance brought forward. For that we shall turn to chapter x. 11: “Go now

ye that are men,

and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire.” The question is asked in the end of verse 8

by Pharaoh, "Who are they that shall go?" and Moses replies, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." And Pharaoh's answer was, "Go now ye that are men . . . for that ye did desire"; and they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. Now here we have come to a positive testimony to Pharaoh of separation to the Lord. It is a step considerably in advance of the last. We saw where practically the mass of Christians capitulated, but now we have got positive testimony to complete moral separation from the world, resulting in expulsion from the presence of its prince. Thank God for that, for it but brings us like the blind beggar of John ix. into the presence of Christ. The moment the actual witness of separation to God is proclaimed in the face of the foe, they are driven out with the words: "Go now *ye that are men.*" Too well the enemy knows the impossibility of that. What about the ttle ones and the wives? How blessed it is that Christianity is so wide in its character, and that the heart of the blessed God is so great! Christianity is not a selfish thing. Under the good hand of God, God will have all that belongs to us. What a comfort for a

man and his house—no question of the wife and the little ones being left behind. The wife is to have her place with the man, and the children are to have their place in the service and privilege of the congregation. It should exercise us keenly as to whether we have capitulated at that point and have left all that is dear to us in the grip of the enemy; and on the converse side, to see children growing up, those who have been brought up having the privileges of the congregation, scouting it all that they may have the pleasures of this world.

One more hindrance remains, but we must first allude to verse 23 of chapter x. One fact in Thessalonians particularly marks the saints off from the rest of the world. You will remember the expression: "God hath not appointed us to wrath." God is about to join issue with this world on account of the putting to death of Christ, but God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are not children of darkness, sons of night, but we are sons of day. (1 Thess. v.) The fact is this: darkness covers the world and all its achievements and progress, but the saints have light in their dwellings—yea, they are "sons of light." This we see here in the two aspects of the death of Christ—toward the

world and toward the saints. The three days' darkness is the distance of death, and the three days' journey in the wilderness is the march of resurrection, and that involves the passage of the Red Sea. The wilderness is to be reached through the death of Christ, a journey which the saints have to travel that God may get His portion in them in resurrection.

We may turn now to the fourth hindrance of the enemy, chapter x. 24:

“Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.”

It is very agreeable to Satan to see people on this road—proving themselves to be good members of religious society, but ignoring Christ. You may let your little ones go now, says the world's prince, only let your flocks and your herds be stayed—go without those; they but set forth the death of Christ, and that may be dispensed with in this enlightened age. You can give up the atonement. Why cleave to such an old-fashioned thought? Let your little ones go now—yes, but the blood of Christ! Ah, but we may not surrender the truth of the atonement. “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” and new theology falsehoods are no newer

than Genesis iii. ; it is the bloodless gospel. More than that : the saints of God would be absolutely deprived of presenting that which rises up before Him in all its blessedness and eternally sweet savour—the death of Christ. Are you prepared to take up the service of God shorn of its very basis? *It is that last proposition of Satan that calls down the final wrath of God upon the world.* One plague more. (Chap. xi. 1.) A public offer to the saints of God to send them out simply on social terms and deprived of all that would present the death of Christ to God brings down direct judgment. This last hindrance is already offered to us, thrust in our faces on every hand, flauntingly, blasphemously. One plague more, and God will sweep the whole scene in judgment, for He has then no more to say. "About midnight"—the darkest moment come. When is that? The moment of the world's proudest progress. Why should that be its darkest moment? Because the things that are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God. And at midnight (how soon that may be here!) God will rise up as a mighty man of war and will crush the whole power of the enemy and of his world. There was not one house in Egypt where there was not one dead. A mighty cry goes up; this world

staggers under the awful power of God in judgment.

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And now we find Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron by night, saying, "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people." The break had come, and the redeemed people of God under the shelter of the atoning sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ went forth by ranks. God brought them out with a high hand. He waged war against all the gods of Egypt and against its prince. The moral result in the people was that they appreciated the blood of God's Lamb.

Then Pharaoh and his servants rose up and said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go *from serving us*?" That is the point. That brings us to the reality of the present conflict, which is not yet finished in this aspect of it. The prince of this world and his servants would hold God's saints in bondage to the world-system, but God's demand is: "Let my son go, that he may serve me," and serve in the liberty of sonship. We have the celebration of victory in

chapter xv. : "The Lord is a man of war : the Lord is his name," and we thus see God's saints actually carried over from the old ground of responsibility in this present evil world to a ground of holiness before God—transferred to it in the redemption of the blood of the Lamb, and brought into the good of it in themselves as they learn its import in their souls with God.

And all this has its immediate bearing upon us. The last hindrance has been proposed by Satan and the last public judgment of God is about to fall upon this world. Where are our hearts ? Have we turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ? That is His just requirement, and that is our blessed privilege.

"When they shall say, Peace and safety : then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day : we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us watch and be sober."

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly."



“THE LORD MY BANNER.”

EXODUS XVII. 7-16 ;

DEUTERONOMY XXV. 17-19 ;

1 SAMUEL XV. 23, 32, 33 ; XVI. 13 ;

ISAIAH XIV. 12-15 ;

2 THESSALONIANS II. 3-14.

WE may recall the scriptures which were before us last week, as they form part of a whole. Our subject is the war of the Lord. It is one war, but it has several aspects ; five may come particularly before us. The war of the Lord is directed against the ancient serpent. Last week we looked at the initiation of that war, as seen in Exodus in connection with the redeemed people whom God was setting free from this present evil world and from the dominion of its prince. I may also recall to you the verse in Judges iii. which indicates to us the importance of the subject : “ That the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof ”—the point was that they might know war by learning it, and that is how we have to proceed. We have to know war by learning it, and there is no

royal road to it. I desire therefore to trace these five aspects of the war that we may gain a better acquaintance with God, and with what God is for His redeemed people, and that the moral result of it may be produced in us.

In each of these aspects of the war of the Lord we shall endeavour to trace *four main thoughts*. The *first* of them is, and must be, as in every scripture that comes under the contemplation of God's saints, the character in which the Lord is presented to us. The *second* is, what guise does Satan assume in each combat? The *third*, what is the point of conflict in each? If the point of conflict be not known we might be warring aimlessly. The *fourth* is, what is the moral effect intended to be brought about in the saints?

In the one we looked at last week we saw Jehovah presented as a Man of war; Satan, under the figure of Pharaoh, is seen as the prince of this world intent upon holding God's people in bondage; the point of conflict is God's right to His son for service; the moral result brought about in the saints is that they may learn the truth as to death—first Moses, who had to learn it practically in relation to his son, seen in the words of Zipporah: "Surely a bloody

husband art thou to me," and then the children of Israel, who learned it in connection with the blood of the Lamb.

Then we saw the four great hindrances that are brought in by Satan, with which God's saints have to contend. One is, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land"—that is what is put forward to Christians to-day. The next is, "Ye shall not go very far away," and we saw that Christendom had capitulated at that point and accepted the terms. Then on Moses enforcing the terms of entire separation, the violence of the enemy breaks forth: "Go now, *ye that are men*, and serve the Lord," and they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. The fourth hindrance is most subtle of all, bringing down the wrath of God upon this world: "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." In other words: Go without the power to present the sufferings and death of Christ to God. We are faced with that at the present day in the public enticement to give up the atonement. That last hindrance of Satan draws down the unsparing judgment of God upon this scene.

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To-night we will consider another phase

of the war of the Lord. The redeemed people are brought out of Egypt on to new and holy ground, and immediately a new principle of evil asserts itself, one which is found in every one of our hearts naturally: rebellion against God. Scripture stamps this with its true character: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." We have it in Exodus xvii., Massah and Meribah: "Because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?" So surely as the enemy is allowed a place he will gain an advantage.

Now let us apply our four thoughts so that we move on in the scriptures with our minds in order in regard of the war of the Lord. No military general would set out to battle without seeing the bearings of the conflict, and we have to do the same. We shall find that the divine presentation in this chapter is Jehovah-nissi: "The Lord my banner." Satan comes forward as Amalek, and in him we have a type of "the man of sin." The last verse of Exodus xvii. gives us the point of conflict, a most important, and indeed, a very solemn one. Taking the Hebrew marginal reading it is: "The hand upon the throne of the Lord." That is the point of conflict, and the moral

result brought about in the people is that they come under the only possible cover in view of the rebelliousness of their own hearts: they are found in figure under the rod of authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a new point of communion is reached in the altar set up by Moses: "Jehovah-nissi." There would be no object in warfare were it not that by this means a new link is established between God and the soul. There is thus a fresh apprehension of His greatness and of victory assured in His power.

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Having sketched out the bearings of the subject, we might approach it more in detail. We will begin at Exodus xvii. 16, because that will give us the point of conflict. The verse itself reads: "Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." We see there perpetual warfare. And why? Because man has come under the influence of rebellion. It came in at the fall—he became a rebel from God. Satan insinuated that he could do better for man than God could, and that lie has remained in the heart of man from that day to this, "from generation to generation." Israel in murmuring at Meribah had laid himself open to the attacks of Amalek, and he bears down upon the

hindmost. We may say that we should greatly enjoy a time of peace and to settle down for a moment. It but shews the necessity, from generation to generation, of warfare between the Lord and between Satan under the character of Amalek.

Now for the point of conflict: the hand upon the throne of Jah. What was the throne of Jah? It was the sovereign right of God to rule the universe, borne witness to in His ability to rule and shepherd His elect people. And what had come in? A mighty being had dared to assail the majesty of that throne, and to place his hand upon it. He had assayed to scale the heights of heaven morally, and to place an aggressive hand upon the throne of Jehovah. That is the point of conflict, and that has never yet been fully dealt with. God is patient and has acted in patience throughout the ages of that perpetual warfare. In result He would bring us into the patience of Christ, who is armed with full authority to deal with the question. This He will not do until the moment is ripe when the character of the rebellion is fully demonstrated: then He will act in unsparing judgment.

What is the moral effect in you and me? That we learn to deal with rebellion in unsparing judgment as it comes up in ourselves

to-day. You may say: I do not know of rebellion in my heart, but it is there. What is its character? It rebels at the rule of God; it resists His hand. What is the character it takes in Saul? We are quite prepared to accept the judgment of God upon all that is vile and refuse, but when it comes to the question of what is good and gracious we draw the line. This is rebellion against God. We set aside the expressed judgment of God, and seek to press into His service that which He has utterly rejected. The result in Saul here is, that he is rejected: he had thrown in his lot with Agag, and the word goes forth, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected *thee*." God had proposed a war of extermination, but Saul had spared Agag alive, and also the best of the cattle, and that in order that he might "sacrifice to Jehovah." Samuel faces him with this, and names his sin. "The voice of the words of the Lord," commanding the extermination of Amalek, had found no place in Saul's heart. He thus asserts his own will against God, sparing the serviceable and good, while dealing in judgment with the base and refuse. But "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," and thus Samuel unveils the sin of Saul. Saul was unaware of how completely he had

succumbed to the enemy. He had met a more kingly man than himself, and had come under his influence. Agag was a great king, and he was there in kingly grace. You see his court manners, so to speak, as he approaches Samuel. "And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is passed." What more could be demanded? Surely Agag could now be spared by the Lord's prophet since the vile had been judged? How answers the prophet, "Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." There is no forgiveness for rebellion against God. It must be unsparingly judged in you and me from generation to generation, and God in His patient waiting is allowing it to reach its head in a man, and then He will finally judge it. Satan has laid claim, in the rebellious pride of his heart, to sovereignty in God's universe, and that sin will be expressed in a man. That gives one an idea of the hand upon the throne of Jehovah. Saul being rejected, way is made for the man after God's own heart. David, type of Christ, forgotten of men, but chosen of God, comes into view in the grace and beauty of his person, and is anointed with oil "in the midst of his brethren." (1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13; compare Heb. i. 9.)

But conflict must come, and will first touch those at the rear. In Deuteronomy we read: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary." The peculiar tactics of Satan in this character are seen in attacking the saints when they are faint and weary, when their confidence in God is on the wane. Jehovah takes note of this. In one short clause the true character of Amalek is summed up: "*He feared not God.*" Of the future wilful king we also read: "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers." (Dan. xi. 37.) Hence the divine command: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." Do we forget it? Do we forget that there is that in you and me which lays us open to the attacks of Amalek? that we have to judge in ourselves that which God will publicly judge by-and-by—the man of sin? that we have to guard our moments of despair—the time when we are "faint and weary"? Thou shalt not forget it. How prone we are to forget it! How are God's saints supported of God? The support is in this: "The Lord my banner." There is

no cover for the sin of rebellion other than the fact that God has dealt with it absolutely in the death of Christ, and now the great truth for us in regard to it is, “The Lord my banner.” We place ourselves under the authority of the Lord.

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Now to touch on the working out of this beautiful picture in Exodus xvii. Joshua for the first time now comes on the scene and Moses gives directions to him: “Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.” That brings in a very important point. We traced in the first address how the rod in the hand of Moses was turned before Pharaoh into a serpent, and that then it swallowed up all the serpents brought into being by Satanic power. Then on Moses taking it by the tail, it again became a rod in his hand. Moses in this is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rod represents the power which God reserves in His own right in the over-government of this world. This has been usurped by Satan; but the Lord Jesus Christ has power to put forth His hand, taking hold of that which had become Satanic in character: the moment He does so it will turn in His hand to the

rod of authority, which He will use on behalf of His people. That is in virtue of His death and resurrection. He wields the authority now for His people, and by-and-by He will wield it over the nations, not by reformative and socialistic measures, but as a rod of iron, in the only way the nations can be ruled.

We see in Exodus xvii. Christ figured in Moses with the rod of authority in his hand. Christ stands on. Moses appears here as a poor, weak, failing type of Christ, with the rod of God in his hand. Moses' hands were heavy and he was held and supported on each side by Aaron and Hur, himself seated on a stone, so that the rod might not fall. It is not now in the hand of a weak, frail man, but in the hand of Him who has "all power in heaven and earth." We know well, though the battle is swaying to and fro, what the result will be. The rod is held by the Lord Jesus Christ on high, and He will not give way. The rod of authority over all the power of evil is unfailingly held, because it is supported not by what is external, not by the priest, nor by the man who represented holiness in his name (Hur), but by the Lord Jesus Christ, in the fact that He Himself is Priest and holiness. It is held in the power of His own blessed

Person. "It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." We might say to one another sometimes: How is it all going to end? We see evil gaining ground, the conflict swaying, good spurned, evil preserved, and we say, How is the battle going? "His hands were steady until the going down of the sun." The hands of the Lord Jesus will never relax till this world's sun sets in gloom. He takes up the rod of authority until the enemy is crushed with power under our feet. "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." There is no tithe for God out of Amalek. It is placed on record, and God will not pass it by, God will blot out the memory of rebellion from under heaven. "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi"—the Lord my banner. This alone is our resource, we may place ourselves under the good of "the Lord my banner." But we cannot avail ourselves of this divine cover unless we accept the teaching of the war.

I shall have occasion to recall you to these scriptures in order that the whole scheme may be before us, but I think we shall see in 2 Thessalonians the final public overthrow of Satan in this character. The important thing for us at the present moment is that we wage the war *now in ourselves*.

All this makes room for Exodus xviii., which ushers in the millennial world. "When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt; then Jethro . . . took Zipporah, Moses' wife . . . and her two sons." The present reign of grace gives place to the order of divine government in the world to come. During the actual deliverance of the people from Pharaoh's power, the church, as seen in Zipporah, is absent, as she will actually be during the future moment of Jacob's trouble and deliverance. But when this has been publicly effected, and Anti-christ judged, saints of this day will come into view again to rejoice with Israel and the Gentiles in the righteous sway of Christ, prefigured in Moses as king in Jeshurun. It is all extremely beautiful. Moses sits to judge, and then Jethro lends his counsel and aid, and we find them eating bread together in the mount of God. It is to that end God

is waging war from generation to generation : that He might bring in peace through Christ as King.

Now, turning to Isaiah xiv., we find again that the prophetic utterances point to the heading up of lawlessness in man. It presents Satan clothed ; that is, sheltering himself behind man ; it is *man* who sets his hand upon the throne of Jah. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" There we get the moment when Satan will be cast down and lose the throne that he has taken up in man. People want light, but they do not want the light of God. There is a fallen being named Lucifer, "day star," whom they will receive as the star of man's day. "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven." Mark, it is Satan in man—"Is this the *man*?" we read in verse 16. It is man, then, who aspires to this place : "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the most High." This is anti-christ, incarnation of Satan. It is the man of sin, the lawless one, the great rebel, the sum of the rebellion in men's hearts—but for grace, in your heart and in mine !

Have these principles which contribute to this awful character of things any place with ourselves ? Surely not, you say. But let

us go back to the principle: refuse the bad and spare the good. If that principle be allowed with us, we are so far contributory to man's lawlessness; and when that lawlessness heads up in a man and takes its final form, then God will judge it unsparingly. May we find grace to do so now.

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I would now ask your attention to 2 Thesalonians. One's desire is that we might gain its present bearing. We do not feel the power of scripture so much when it merely interests us, but our exercise should be, what has the Lord Jesus Christ to say to us in scripture at any given moment? The word of God always possesses this remarkable quality, that it is living and operative. The newspapers of the day may give yesterday's news and to-day's news. But you and I need to-morrow's news, and scripture can give this in unfailing certainty from the mouth of God. We spoke of the rod of God which Moses had in his hand, and now I want to shew you its bearing at this moment. Why have we not got the full working out of lawlessness in the man of sin? The conflict has not at all ceased: Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Why, then, has it not yet come to a head? Because there is

“what withholdeth,” and there is also “he that letteth.” There are the two thoughts in the chapter, and I draw your attention to the first: “Now ye know *what* withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.” I have no doubt that refers to what we have typified in the rod of Moses—the personal authority that is invested in the Lord Jesus Christ, in which God is over-governing this world. God is entirely silent in the actual government of this world; Satan is the god of this world (Amalek), and the prince of this world (Pharaoh). He has usurped authority, but in order that God may work out His purpose and gather out a people for His name there is “that which withholdeth,” and I doubt not that this is God’s over-government. People say, “Why do you not take part in politics and government?” By so doing I am telling the world it is not nearly so bad as it is. The fact of Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom, and taking part in that way in its government, gave a false colour to the place. The Christian who takes part in the government of this world does the world a grave injustice. God is over all, and the Christian’s place is to pray. He does not vote, but he prays for government abstractly—for kings and all that are in authority.

“There is what withholdeth ;” the moment that is withdrawn, what is in the hearts of men and only restrained by authority will break out, and will develop in the man of sin, the lawless one. Are you and I in any way contributory to that awful consummation of man’s rebellious heart. Well, we must apply the test *lest we forget it*. The apostle says, “Ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” The mystery of iniquity is rebellion ; it is that which dismisses the bad and spares the good : that will culminate and materialise in the man of sin, leading to the worship of man as god—“who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.” He is Lucifer ; he is a man, and he may be alive to-day. The last hindrance of the prince of this world has been proclaimed : You may be as religious as you will, but give up the atonement. Man will be worshipped as God, and the last judgment of God is about to fall on this world. I do not wish to occupy you with Satan, for it is the love of the truth which preserves, and if the saints receive the love of the truth they are absolutely garrisoned against all that will eventuate in the man of sin. They receive the truth in devotion and affection to the

Person of Christ. The "love of the truth" and "Jehovah my banner" are kindred thoughts; there is no remedy for the rebellion that is in our hearts other than coming under the Lord and His banner. The Lord is waging this war from generation to generation until He blots out the name of Amalek from under heaven. God's judgment will fall upon this world at "midnight;" it will be the moment of this world's proudest progress, but God regards it as midnight. But we are not of the night, but of the day, and the Spirit of God has given us the light that we might be in self-judgment lest we be found contributory to the world.

Paul sums up here the thought of knowing Jehovah as "the Lord my banner"—"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." How magnificent the prospect! This aspect of the war will not cease until the man of sin is produced by the rebelliousness of man's heart, but meanwhile the issue of the war is in the hand of the Lord—the rod

of authority is held by Him: He is our banner, and by the power of the Spirit of God we can to-day, in view of this very principle in our hearts, answer to what we get in Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven ;

"thou shalt not forget it."



THE LORD AS SUPREME ADVERSARY.

I CORINTHIANS X. 8 ;
REVELATION II. 12-14, 16, 17 ;
PSALM CVI. 28-31 ;
NUMBERS XXII. to XXV. ; XXXI.

IT is well for us to have scripture before our minds so that the Lord may apply it as He sees fit ; all scripture is for our instruction in righteousness, and the thought of the Lord's conflict was very much pressed upon my mind as having a present-day bearing on every one of us. The war of the Lord is one, but it has many aspects, and though as looking back to the death and resurrection of Christ we can see how the complete victory has been gained over the whole power of the enemy in Him ; yet God is bringing about in each one of us a moral answer to-day to that victory. He is bringing us in heart and conscience to-day into accord with His own war and victory. The war has to be fought out in our own souls, and the moral results are our spoil, but the victory is *His*.

We have endeavoured to keep four

thoughts in view in looking at those aspects of the war which have been specially before us at this time: (1) the presentation of divine Persons; (2) the 'guise under which Satan is seen; (3) the point of conflict; and (4) the moral result brought about in the people of God.

The first conflict we looked at was in Exodus and referred to the present position. We did not view the incidents as past history merely, nor as simply typical of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, important as it is to see them as such; but as indicating the present activities of Satan as the prince of this world in order to hold in bondage the people of God that they may serve him instead of God. In that aspect of the war we saw the Lord presented as a Man of war: He is aggressive. *He* raises the controversy. He waged war against the gods of Egypt, the false deities who held and enslaved the hearts of His people. The guise under which Satan was seen was as the prince of this world, not so much in its religious character as in its grandeur and magnificence—he held the people in bondage that they might build his treasure cities. That is the position of many of God's people to-day—they are building up the treasure cities of the prince of this world. But God

has intervened in the death and resurrection of Christ to claim their service for Himself. The point of conflict in Exodus was God's right to the service of His son; and the moral result in the people was that they accepted the meaning of the blood: it was their deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh. In Moses' case it was set forth in himself—the Lord sought to slay him on account of his son, and Zipporah's comment is: "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." God is bringing His people out of this present evil world that they may serve Him, and He is placing them on new and holy ground, seen in connection with the burning bush, where Moses was commanded to take his shoes from off his feet. God's people were hindered by Pharaoh, whose last proposal was such as drew down from heaven the final wrath of God "at midnight." From man's point of view the world is nearing the period of its greatest progress and magnificence, but that will be the moment of its doom, for the time-piece of God's ways marks only a few moments before the hour of "midnight." We may see this in the fact that Satan's proposal to serve God without the basis of the atonement is thrust upon us on every hand.

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Last week we considered the first attack on the people after their deliverance from Egypt on the part of Amalek, and the character in which the Lord is presented there as a banner for His people—"Jehovah-nissi." The character of Satan is that of the man of sin, antichrist; the point of conflict, the hand upon the throne of Jah—that is seen in a man; it is fully demonstrated in the man of sin whom Satan will put forward. Right down through the ages, in anticipation of it, Satan has placed an aggressive hand in bold defiance upon the throne of Jehovah. He has said as Lucifer, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High," and against such assumption God will wage perpetual warfare. What lay behind it was rebellion; we saw that instanced in the case of Saul, who, refusing to hearken to the Lord's commandment, spared Agag, because he was a great king, and rejected the judgment of God on the flesh. The outcome of his rebellion is that he destroys all that is refuse and vile but spares the good. We should not have thought this to be rebellion, but God takes account of it in its true character, and must deal with it until the rod of authority held by Christ shall fall finally upon the head of antichrist. The effect in the people is that they come under the cover

of the banner of Jehovah. There is no other defence for the saints against the rebelliousness of their own hearts, ever tending to help forward the advent of the man of sin.



I feel the difficulties of the aspect of the war against Moab which is what is before us to-night, but would like to make a few simple remarks in connection with it. We might perhaps apply the four thoughts in order to centralise our attention. First, the presentation of the Lord, as far as I have weighed it, is as the supreme Adversary, the One who sets Himself to withstand the false prophet. (See Chap. xxii. 22.) This may seem to be a very unusual character, but it appears thus to me. Satan is presented as the false prophet, the great seducer of God's people. The point of conflict is God's right to maintain the divine purpose in regard of His people. His right to have an elect people and to view them as such. The moral result brought about in the saints is that they seek at every cost to maintain the divine standard. That is seen in Phinehas.

1 Corinthians x. 8 leads us to the chapters around which our thoughts will very largely turn. (Num. xxv., xxxi.) It is not so much the prophecies of Balaam that are there in

view, but rather the war which ensued upon the seduction of the people by Balaam. We have allusion there to the sin, which was of course an actual one in Corinth, but which has a spiritual significance: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." That shews the character of the seduction which was practised by this false prophet—it was to lead the people of God away from their allegiance to Him. We shall see how he attempted in every way to drag down and assail the divine standpoint, but without success; God would not allow him to do it, but frustrated in his first attempt, he took other measures and worked by way of seduction, in leading them to form unholy associations. The moral result brought about with Phinehas, who secured the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, was that he sought at every cost to maintain their practical state in accord with the divine standpoint. The effort of the false prophet was to debase God's elect people and bring them to the lowest corruption, but God's summary judgment falls and He vindicates His own holiness before the sun. Without expounding it, I think you will see that this thought is manifest in the word to Pergamos. The Lord as the supreme Adversary against

evil comes out in relation to that assembly—"He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." It is an invincible sword, and the Lord says, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of my mouth"—against those in their midst who held the doctrine of Balaam. Satan's throne was there, for Satan is an adversary too, he had much of which to accuse, but Christ is the supreme Adversary. "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He will not suffer corruption in His elect.

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We might now look a little at the detail—first at the four prophecies of Balaam, bearing in mind that Balaam is an undoubted picture of the present activity of Satan to corrupt the people of God and to bring them into promiscuous and unholy associations. The connection between Moab and Midian was a very close one, and both were kindred to Israel; the Midianites represent the magnificence of this world. The king sent for Balaam, a soothsayer, to curse the people; but God said to him, "Thou shalt not go . . . thou shalt not curse . . . for they are blessed." Balaam held the place of the prophet of the Lord but as to fact he was a devil worshipper; Satan was behind this

wretched man. At first he says, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you," but on Balak pressing it he goes. Then he is met by an adversary with a drawn sword in his hand. We shall find the thought of the sword carried through from beginning to end, and at last Balaam perishes by the sword. "The angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him and the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Balaam made three attempts to go forward and on the third occasion the angel spoke plainly to him: "Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me" (*lit.*, thy way before me is for ruin). Now it is well to view things from this standpoint. Here was this being setting himself to secure the ruin of the people of God, to debase their actual state to that of corruption, but although he is forced to proclaim their blessing, and to be the voice of the divine mind, he is told at the outset, "Thy way before me is for ruin," and so it ended. God marks out the pathway at the very outset.

Now we shall find three great vantage points are chosen by the enemy, and every position is taken up in order to weaken the unfolding of the divine standpoint from which

God views His people. But God maintains His right to declare the divine view of His people, and in a day of outward weakness and failure such as ours, He still presents His purpose in grace for the comfort and stay of our hearts. The divine purpose can never be frustrated by our failure, for it rests on the work of divine Persons, and there is no failure there. Balaam is first brought to the high places of Baal that he might see the utmost part of the people, and there he initiates a system of imitation worship. There are seven altars, seven bullocks and seven rams—an imitation of the real thing, set up under this false prophet and bearing the outward character of the worship of God. Underneath it are the enchantments of the soothsayer, and every kind of vantage ground is taken up in order that the people of God may be viewed, not according to the divine mind, but according to the human mind. In the first instance Balaam is brought to a position from whence he might see the utmost part of the people; the second time he only saw a part of them; and in the third instance he is taken up to another place and views them with the wilderness before him.

I will just touch on the special point of these three prophecies, because although he was bent upon doing mischief if possible, the

enemy is really in the hand of the Lord. I know of no verse more comforting than this: "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." (2 Cor. xiii. 8.) People may set out to do a very great deal, but they can do no more than God allows. That is the case in connection with this false prophet. He is used to bring out the whole divine standpoint in regard to God's elect people. The first great thing is separation: "The people shall dwell alone." Now it is well that we should take that home to ourselves if God forced that testimony from the lips of the enemy. That is the divine standpoint, and if God allows that to be put before us, it is intended to greatly influence us. We cannot answer to what is not before us, and the divine standpoint is put before us that we may answer to it. It is not one side of the truth—the divine presentation, *or* our side—but it is *the truth*; it is set forth in the sword with two edges. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." People are rather proud of being reckoned among the nations; many Christians are proud of being Englishmen to-day, but God never relaxes His standard of absolute separation from this world: "The people shall dwell alone." But the moment a divine presentation is brought in, the whole effort

of the enemy is to mix the people up with the nations.

Every vantage ground will be taken by Satan in order to lower the divine thought, and Balaam is next brought to a point where he could see only part of the people. Again God's thought is expressed in what he gives utterance to, and the central point of the second prophecy is, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel"—Jacob, the crooked man, He hath not beheld iniquity in him! It answers very much to Romans viii. In chapter iii. God's saints are justified on their own side; in chapter viii. they are justified for the divine pleasure. It is a great thing if I as a saint of God have the consciousness of having been justified as to my own side, but it is a greater thing to have the consciousness, as forming part of the elect people of God, that we are justified from God's side. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." That was for the divine pleasure. And here God justified His people for the divine pleasure.

Then we come to the third prophecy.

“Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.” There he most distinctly gets the divine view, a vertical view, of the saints as in the mind of God—virtue, beauty and order are there: “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 [not man], and as cedar trees beside the waters.” What a picture of grandeur, tranquillity, refreshment and blessedness! Do you know the saints of God in that character? You say: I know a good many of them and they are not all that; there is a good deal of crookedness and perverseness about them. Well, pray that you may get a divine view. We want to view the saints of God from above. It was the apprehension of this that brought Phinehas into accord with the divine judgment in the plague, and enabled him to act in summary judgment on the profane prince who disregarded the tears of his brethren. “He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters.” Israel in a future day will cover the nations with blessing, “and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.” One cannot help but see how these various aspects of the war of the

Lord dovetail into one another. Last week Agag was brought in and here he is referred to again. Later on in the chapter he takes up Amalek: "Amalek was the first of the nations." Balaam then tells what this people should do to the people of Moab in the latter days, and that will come before us in chapter xxxi.

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I have spoken of Christ as the supreme Adversary; of Satan as the false prophet; of the point of conflict as the divine view of the people of God; and of the result produced in the saints as being seen in Phinehas—that is, that at every cost they are prepared to vindicate the divine thought. Now we see in chapter xxv. what happens. Scripture in other places lets us into the secret of what was at work. The false prophet was at work, and he is at work to-day. He has been active right down the ages of Christianity, and has gathered up that which is kindred in a certain sense to the people of God, yet that which he can use for seduction. That I take to be typified by the daughters of Moab and Midian. They are marked by outward friendliness—kindred of the saints; and they are marked by what is social—there is no division between them and the world. "They called the people unto the sacrifices

of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Such a condition of things as this could not be tolerated. If God has indicated His view of His people—"the people shall dwell alone"—He will have no infringement of it. He vindicates Himself by bringing in the plague, and the number of those who died in that way were twenty-four thousand. And here in the light of the mid-day sun an offence is committed by an Israelite in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation. The high position which both the man and the woman occupied is placed on record and doubtless for a purpose—she was a king's daughter and the Israelite was the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. (Vers. 14, 15.) Phinehas then comes into view. He presents to us the proper moral effect produced in the saints by the sense of the position which the Lord has taken up as the supreme Adversary. The Lord says, "He was zealous for *my* sake"; and that is the effect in the people of God in connection with this aspect of the war of the Lord. Phinehas takes a javelin and executes divine judgment; he thus covers his people and turns away the divine wrath from the

children of Israel and obtains for himself a covenant of peace: "Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel." That is open to the saints of God now in its moral bearing, for we are faced with this position to-day: the daughters of Moab, the Midianites' system of false worship and the open bid to drag down the people of God to a lower level than the divine standard. But the divine thought has been expressed and this in order that there might be produced in us true zeal for the rights of God.

Now if the world in its religious character invites you, that moment you have to become aggressive—you have to harass them. You do not meet the religious world as a peaceable guest. One may see this in the Lord's own pathway; invited to a feast He did not smooth over His words, and the host was often the one who first felt the keen edge of them. So their position as regards the world is here set forth in: "Harass the Midianites and smite them."

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Now I must pass on to chapter xxxi. This is the last act of Moses and it has therefore

very great significance ; it links us up with the end of the days. Without assuming to understand all that is in the chapter, we may note its particular bearing on the saints of to-day in view of what has come under our notice. We find also here the death of Balaam : " Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Inasmuch as Satan in the character of Balaam is still active among God's people, we may rightly say that the chapter has an application even now, and I doubt not this war will become more strenuous every day. The word to Moses is, " Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites : afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge *the Lord* of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand" One thing is very evident here : the whole of Israel had to be represented in this warfare, it presents the people as rising unitedly against the wiles of Midian. That ought to be of some encouragement for us. Here is a warfare in which we all have to be represented ; it is a warfare from which there is spoil, and therefore we ought to go in for it. Great treasure resulted to the people of God from this peculiar aspect of the war of the Lord.

There was of every tribe a thousand "armed for war." I need hardly say that armour for war is a question of state; it is what the man is built up in within, and involves also continual self-judgment. What we have before us to-night is a question of *state*—first in the divine aspect as divinely conferred; and then the practical state which morally corresponds with it, and which is equally important. "Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand." I see the greatest importance in that: that Phinehas, a younger member of the house of Aaron, yet a priest of perpetual priesthood because he vindicated the glory of Jehovah, is the one chosen as leader in this conflict. He who should give character to the people of God in this warfare is the one who could give moral effect to the thought of God. Phinehas was to lead to the war with the holy instruments; no other instruments would be carried, none of man's welding—no sword, however tempered and sharp and forged in man's armoury—nothing but the holy instruments and the alarm trumpets. They were to avenge the Lord on Midian, and only holy instruments can avail in His warfare. "If ye go to the war

in your land then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets" (Num. x. 9)—that is not man's fight—it is the Lord's. And they went to war with the Midianites and brought the captives and the prey to the camp, and Moses and Eleazar and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them "without the camp." The meeting place had to be "without the camp," that is where the sin-offering was burnt, and there was no entrance into the camp except by purification. It shews that God hates the contamination of the seducers of His people.

Now Moses raises a question: "Have ye saved all the women alive?" "And Moses was wroth." (Vers. 14-18.) In the application of this, Moses as the divine leader would give no quarter, and every male and every woman who had contributed to the downfall of the people must be judged; God will unsparingly judge all that have been active in seducing His saints from the divine thought. But what is noticeable here is that there is something saved from the wreck—all the "women children"; all that had not come under the active principle of the evil as represented in the male.

Against the latter the Lord must fight with the sword of His mouth, but the women children—that which, so to speak, maintained

its virgin character even in the midst of this deplorable condition of things—that was saved, and is brought in as spoil. That differs rather from Babylon, which is absolutely judged, root and branch. Anything that has the virgin character God will save in the way of spoil for His people.

We may now refer for one moment to the character of the spoil that accrues to God's people. While it is quite true it has reference to the latter days ("I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days"), we may consider it in its moral bearing as for us at the present day. "The gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean." In some measure that may answer to the Epistle to the Corinthians. There was among these saints the appropriation of divine thoughts, but they had been debased to the level of man's mind, they had made them contributory to man's glory instead of God's. Now here there is what is available for Jehovah and His people—all that would go through the fire: gold, silver, brass, &c.—figuratively setting forth divine thoughts laid hold of by those who seduced the people of God. They can stand the fire nevertheless, and they have

to be purified with the water of separation. "Then all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water. And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp." All this results in very great spoil for the people of God and they get a memorial too in the presence of the Lord. Those who go down to the war get their portion, Jehovah gets His portion, the priest and the Levites get their portion, as also the people who did not go to the battle.

In the end of the chapter we read that the officers took the sum of the men of war, and there *lacked not one man*. You need not be afraid to go to God's war with the holy instruments and with the trumpets of alarm. God's Priest is with us, and there is no fear of falling in the battle—"There lacketh not one man of us."

There is no aggressiveness in a carnal way about this war; I lay hands on myself first. One cannot lift a blow against the foe that has not first had its effect in one's own soul. Phinehas could not have taken hold of the sword of judgment had it not first had its bearing on himself. It was "for the fear wherewith he feared *me*, and was afraid

before my name" that the Lord grants him the covenant of life and peace, and allows him to be His messenger. .

The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself, and they brought to Moses and Eleazar an offering for the Lord, which was brought into the tabernacle of the congregation for a memorial for the children of Israel.

One word more, and that is in reference to the scripture in Revelation ii., where we have an allusion to Christ as the supreme Adversary: "To the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." I take it that the sword represents the truth in its double bearing. We need the truth. We may say some people want objective truth, and some want subjective truth, but we need *the truth*—the truth has two edges. The sword must have its double bearing upon us; we do not want any vantage ground the enemy can offer us, with all his subtle bait behind it, to divert us from rejoicing in the divine standard presented in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor, on the other hand, can we abate one iota of its holy demand upon us practically, so that an answer may be inwrought in us by the Spirit, as the presentation of light in our

Lord Jesus Christ. Satan can take you up to various vantage points and say, as Balak did, "Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" How blessed the contrast of the divine offer, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Both these things are hidden, and they answer to the spoil for us to-day. I do not develop it; they are that which man cannot possibly lay hold of. He can have no sense of the hidden manna, and no sense of the white stone with the hidden name in it, but the one who comes into the truth from the divine standpoint, and in whom there is the practical accord with that holy standard, secures both. No doubt the hidden manna answers to the view of Christ as Man here; God saw perfection in Him: not only was there in Him the perfect expression of the whole will and purpose of God, but there was also perfect submission in all that the effectuating of that will involved. There was the expression of perfect and heavenly grace in adverse conditions down here. The divine thought as to Christ, and all that maintained Him here

as Man, is offered to the overcomer. He is given also the stone with the hidden name in it. That is the divine vindication. Men may traduce you here, they may say you have gone to the war for your own advantage, and so on ; but the divine vindication will be given to the one who overcomes here against all the seductive power of Balaam.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

EPHESIANS VI. 10-20.

ISAIAH LIX. 15-19.

JOSHUA III. 10, 11 ; V. 8-15 ; VI. 20.

THESE scriptures present to us a fourth phase of the war of the Lord. In that war, divine Persons are brought before us under different presentations according as each phase of the war varies ; the ancient serpent too appears under many a guise ; but the result of that war is not uncertain. In many phases of it we find ourselves viewed as still down here, but the comfort to the saints of God is that the conflict is God's and that the end is assured victory. Blessed is the part of His saints to be able to stand with Christ, the great Leader in the conflict !

I recall to you the three phases that have already come before us. In the first, the presentation was of God, or rather of Jehovah in His majesty as a Man of war, bringing down His judgment on the prince of this world in order that He may secure the service of His people and produce in them

moral results so that they may answer to His own heart. In the second phase of the war we viewed Jehovah as the banner of His people; we saw Him unfurling His banner over His saints in conflict. There also we noted, under the guise of Amalek, the very marks that will yet come out full-blown in the son of perdition, the man of sin, at the end of the days. "He feared not God," and the wilful king of the last days will not fear God. He will neither fear the God of his fathers—that indicates he is a Jew; nor will he esteem the desire of women—that is the Messiah, Christ; "but in his own estate shall he honour the God of forces." (See Daniel xi. 36, *et seq.*) We saw in that conflict how the rod of authority of Christ, as Lord, is on behalf of His people, and how the fact that Satan, this awful being, had dared to place his hand upon the throne of Jah became the point of conflict. In the third one, last week, we viewed the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme Adversary, first as adversary to all that in His people which would tend to lower the divine standard, and which is seen in every phase of God's warfare; for before His saints can be with God in warfare, that which they are to bring against the foe must first be made good in their own souls. Then we saw how Satan

as false prophet will be judged and slain with the sword. Balaam is slain with the sword. In that last conflict Phinehas is brought forward to lead the hosts of the Lord against the Midianites, to avenge the Lord on Midian and to overthrow it. What marked Phinehas was that he covered the people before Jehovah, and that crowned him with an everlasting priesthood. What a blessed thing to be the cover in any way of God's saints!

* * *

To-night we pass on to another aspect of the war of the Lord, and looking at the four points on which we have endeavoured to concentrate our thoughts previously, we may at once ask: What is the divine presentation? I think we shall see it is that of the Captain of the Lord's host. Then we must seek discernment to pierce the veil under which the enemy will hide himself. Now each character of the war that we have hitherto looked at had to do with God's people in the wilderness, but this one differs wholly in that respect, for it has nothing to do with the wilderness. When Israel entered the land it was a war of dispossession. The land was theirs—it ever had been according to divine purpose—but they were called upon to go in and “utterly destroy”

its inhabitants, and these were summed up in seven-fold spiritual activity and power. They were seven nations. I am not going to dwell on these to-night, and only refer to them to shew that the guise Satan assumes in the land is that of seven nations in complete possession. The divine presentation then is the Captain of the Lord's host; the Satanic character, the seven nations, or to put it in the language of Ephesians vi. (which I suppose is the divine counterpart of the passages in the Old Testament), they are the spiritual lords or world rulers of this darkness. The point of conflict is the land. Then the moral condition necessary in God's people is seen, in the Old Testament passage, in connection with circumcision and the passover and in the eating of the old corn of the land, that the people may come out as warrior priests for God.

* * *

Now having again laid the ground over which we may hope to briefly travel, we may start, perhaps, from the New Testament side of it and expand our thoughts from the type in the Old Testament. We will turn first to Ephesians vi., and start with the point of conflict. We have said that this latter was the land. That requires some unfolding, as to what is typified in the

Old Testament by God's land. We must bear in mind that Canaan was ever God's thought for His saints, His people Israel. Deuteronomy tells us how the "bounds of the people were set according to the number of the children of Israel." When we come to Christianity that has its counterpart. It is not heaven exactly as a future thought, but I think we may say it is divine territory known and enjoyed while the saints are still here upon earth. God's purpose for the saints is that they should have divine territory in present realisation and enjoyment, and it has been made available for them in the fact that Christ has been through death. What opened the way for Israel into the land of old? (Remember that the land was God's centre of the earth. In England we are accustomed to think of London as the pivot of the earth, but the earth for God pivots at Jerusalem, and the eyes of the Lord are always upon that land.) It was the ark passing through the waters of Jordan that made the way for the people to pass over into the promised inheritance—the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. The Lord claims nothing less than all the earth, and He takes up His inheritance in His saints. Christianity is an overlapping period however; on the one hand Chris-

tians partake of the old corn of the land (Christ as indigenous to heaven, so to speak), but on the other hand they are still in the wilderness as to condition. We have not yet come to the "Morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land," when the manna ceased, but nevertheless we can take account of ourselves as in the land, and that as having followed the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth through the waters. The point of conflict here is that we should stand in the divine inheritance, in the truth of the revealed purpose of God for His saints, and stand in it in divine enjoyment. Nothing more raises the bitter hostility of the great enemy of God than the truth of heavenly privilege, known while God's saints are still here. Satan has measured the forces against which he has to war, and he does not undertake to combat singlehanded: he commands all the forces of evil. That is why seven nations are brought in, typifying the completeness of spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. The whole concentrated forces of Satanic power and wisdom are brought to bear against God's saints to hinder their taking possession of the divine purpose for them. Beloved friends, this war is no light thing. We are speaking of what is very serious

indeed, and yet most blessed, for it carries with it "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." "Be strong in the Lord, and in the might of his strength"; there is nothing else can meet the power of Satan. We were quoting in prayer that when David went to meet Goliath he put on Saul's armour, and "assayed to go, for he had not proved it." If we have any thought of donning the armour of Saul to-day we had better put it from us at once; we cannot enter the conflict in the power of the flesh. We must be strong in *the Lord*, and we can afford to be so, for the Lord has vindicated the rights of God in the face of the universe; outside the Lord we are absolutely weak.

"Put on the whole armour of God" (lit., the panoply of God). Now it seems to me that in this question of christian conflict—and this is the only true christian warfare—it is not merely a question of units. An army is composed of units, but it is a corporate reality: and I take it that the scope of this scripture, while of course it must be wrought out in each one individually, and it may be that but two or three are really in the good of it, refers to what is corporate. It embraces the whole christian company on earth in fighting rank. What God secures in moral result for Himself in this particular

exercise is "the Lord's host." You may say, We do not see it. No, but *God* does: His eye takes note of the full and blessed result of His own work; the divine eye can view the saints as His host. Now the panoply of God is provided for them as such. God's people do not go to war at their own charges; there is divine equipment, and that equipment is the whole armour of God. It is provided that we may stand against the wiles of the devil. There is only one devil, though there are hosts of demons I should suppose, but the devil is the supreme enemy of God, the old serpent and Satan; and so serious is this warfare that he has wiles. Wiles are military strategy. He has his arms on the most correct military basis, methodically arranged. We are told here that we war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. God in His great mercy to men had set over the kingdoms of men mighty, holy angels, who should govern the destinies of the nations, and we read in the book of Daniel of Michael, chief among these princes. In awful imitation of the divine system, Satan has set over the kingdoms of men Satanic princes, thrones, principalities, dominions—powerful, yet Satanic in their character, to lead men on to perdition and to drive the

nations to hell. Here we find "principalities, powers, the world rulers of this darkness." Then there are world rulers? Yes, greater than the puny men of this world, for behind men there are those who conduct the nations to their own ends, "the world rulers of this darkness." Why, the twentieth century is one of intense enlightenment! Is it such for God? The Holy Ghost stigmatises it as "this darkness"; that is all. Could it be otherwise when Christ has been rejected here, and God shut out of His inheritance on the earth? "The world rulers of this darkness and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." Satan is still the prince of the power of the air, and occupies still the place of influence over this earth. Presently God's heavenly city will occupy that place, and His saints are learning to-day those principles of heavenly rule which will fit them for the sphere of influence God has purposed for them in the world to come, but even now the epistle to the Ephesians views God's saints as already seated there in the divine purpose; they are already there in that sphere of influence, and it is from thence they combat with the forces of evil down here.

It is well we should view the marshalled forces of the foe, complete in their seven-

fold character, for Satan has had six thousand years' experience with men; but if there be seven nations, God's armour will be of seven-fold perfection to meet their power. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore"—that is the great point. We do not get beyond that in Christianity; it is defensive and offensive warfare, but not exactly aggressive. All that God seeks from His saints is that they stand, having carried everything through—"Stand therefore."

* * *

Let me, therefore, before we pass on to the Old Testament, direct your attention to this armour, which divine wisdom has provided. The enemy is bringing to bear his most powerful forces in order to dislodge the saints from the divine territory secured for them in Christ. The armour is one and belongs to the christian company. As to the thought of putting it on, there are many things in scripture said to be put on, but I think we may see uniformly that in the New Testament the thought conveyed is of what is to mark God's saints inwardly. I may instance the best robe; then there is the "new man" to be put on—it is not that each Christian puts on separately a new man, but

it is one new man, which is created in truthful righteousness and holiness. And so in this armour we find christian qualities which are to mark the saints, each of which stands in contrast to what will mark Satan under the guise of those men in whom he will come forward at the end of times. It is a complete armour in which the saints are to be encased, and the whole must be donned for safety from the foe. When I say encased, I should remark that there is no armour for the back—no armour for cowards. If you want to read the fate of cowards, you can do so in Revelation xxi. 8; they have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. (Compare Jer. xlvi. 10.)

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” The loins are the seat of strength and of the affections, but they are to be “girt about” with truth—it is the girdle of truth. We may think of different truths in the christian revelation, but it is not exactly a question of different truths; the Christian is to be encircled with truth, no part may be lacking, and if the truth of the revelation of God as a whole takes effect in our affections, you will find that there is nothing disproportionate about God’s saints in the way they hold truth. They have the circle of truth, and in that way they are

guarded by the truth. It may be a needed warning that we do not give what we may call particular truth an undue place. First of all the truth in its completeness must have place with us—our loins are to be girt about with truth. That is part of the defensive armour.

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness,” that is, a good conscience. This equipment is divine, it is God-given, and it is there for us to answer to. Unless we preserve a good conscience we cannot be in God’s warfare. Nothing can be more important. Even as before men, Paul exercised himself to have it, and also before God. It is a great thing to be happy with God, that we cultivate the sense of there being no cloud between us and God, that our own wills do not assert themselves. The moment the will is at work we cease to have a clear conscience with God. See how the Lord Jesus, the great Example for us, met the enemy! In the temptation in the wilderness His own will was inert until the divine will had to say to Him. Satan would have put Him outside the position in which He was found, and that is what he would do to you and me; but I have no light until God speaks through His word to me; I have no right to put myself outside

of the position in which I am. The Lord took up a defensive attitude; the word of God was absolutely sufficient for Him. He could say, "I do ever those things that please him." We see it in perfection in the Lord Jesus, but we may come in on the ground of having a purged conscience through His death.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Now the Lord Jesus through His death has won from the usurpation of the foe new and holy ground for His saints to stand upon. The early part of the epistle speaks of peace—no epistle speaks more of it than this. Christ has come preaching peace (chap. ii. 17), and the saints can preach peace—they are to have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. How beautiful to stand here ever in the readiness of the gospel, not simply preaching it spasmodically. What the saints know in their hearts is that peace has been won through the death of the Lord Jesus, and their feet are shod with the readiness of it; it disarms the foe.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith": that is the christian faith that unswervingly has God for its object. It is not that you or I are given measures of faith, but it is

“the shield of faith,” the christian faith that never varies in bringing God before the soul. God is the object of faith. “Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one.” So serious is the conflict that there are inflamed darts used by the enemy in it. It is not the flesh lusting against the Spirit in this warfare, but it is the attack of Satan against the saints in this world, and hence there are inflamed darts. The Spirit speaks of it, and He knows the fiery character of the darts that can burn up and inflame the hearts of God’s people if they would let them in.

“And take the helmet of salvation.” We see the Lord Jesus in Isaiah lix. putting on a helmet of salvation. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him and we see Christ coming out with righteousness as a breastplate and with the helmet of salvation. It is christian salvation, a positive thing. It is the covering for the head.

Now the next thought is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” All up to then is defensive armour; it is the armour of the christian company. Now we come to the offensive, the sword of the Spirit: that is our divine weapon, and that is

what the Lord Jesus Christ used. He did not go outside of the sword of the Spirit, and first used it in its application to Himself. We see Him quoting the word in reference to His own pathway: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He had taken the place of dependent Man here, and the word of God was sufficient for Him: hence He could use it in power against the enemy. It is not merely a knowledge of scripture, but scripture sunk into my soul, forming my soul, as having had its bearing on myself. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God, and that has had its application to our own souls: we have learnt the bearing of it in detail, and we recognise it as God's equipment for His host.

Then the seventh item of the armour is: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." There never comes a moment when I can say I am fully equipped and can stand alone. No, nor can God's saints viewed corporately ever stand without God. "Praying always . . . and watching thereunto." Continual dependence is here and involves our being garrisoned with confidence in God. You may say, I am not strong enough to fight. But you are not too weak to cling to God.

This seven-fold complete armour sets forth christian state and refers to the saints viewed collectively; it is God's thought for them. My moral state is individual, and in that I am brought by the work of the Spirit into accord with the thought of God. Christian state, that is the whole panoply of God here, is God's thought for His people as a whole, it all lies for us in the Spirit. Individually we are brought by the work of the Spirit into the practical good of it, and so maintained.

Then Paul could say: "And for me." In no epistle does the apostle ask to be prayed for as he does here. He was an ambassador. An ambassador in the world is treated with respect in the country where he represents his sovereign, but Paul was in bonds. What an insult to the One who sent him! Yet that ambassador in bonds was the most mighty warrior that the Lord Jesus had for Himself.

* * *

I turn now for a moment to the Old Testament. When the children of Israel entered the land their first halt was at Gilgal. There they learnt the necessity of the setting aside of the flesh, personally and practically, they all had to be circumcised. The next thing is the passover. The pass-

over has to be a divine reality with us: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast." The death of Christ in that aspect of it is the foundation for the keeping of the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The third thing that took place was that the people were fed with the old corn of the land. That is what God's warriors were fed upon. We have to revert to the manna in connection with our wilderness journey, but we find that once they tasted of the old corn of the land, the morrow after the Sabbath came and the manna ceased. The wilderness journey is past, and they feed upon the old corn of the land; that is Christ, but in a special light—as indigenous to heaven, known as ascended up where He was before—Christ known not simply in relation to my need and how He has met that. Thank God, if every soul here knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Saviour. But this is Christ in relation to the heart of the blessed God. He who came here into human condition was a divine Person, and heaven was His proper home. Christ as such is the food of God's warriors.

Now we come to Jericho. This was a very important city, and it summarised the

power of the seven nations; if Jericho fell the rest was doomed. It was the first opposition of Satan to the entrance of the people on to divine territory, and the power of God had to accompany the saints. Hence we see Christ coming upon the scene under the type of the man with the drawn sword. "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The man tests Joshua and gives him an enigmatical answer. He does not say, I am for you. We might like to know that the Lord is for us to the exclusion of everybody else. But no, He must deal with our state; He

"Takes ever knowledge of our state,
 What dims communion with His love,
 Might check our growth, or separate
 Our hearts from what's revealed above."

He answers, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." That most distinctly brings before us the need for the panoply of God; none can answer to the name of the Lord's host unless they are clothed with the whole armour of God;

none can serve as soldiers except those who wear the uniform, and the uniform of God is His panoply. Immediately we see the moral effect in Joshua; he fell on his face, and had to loose his shoe from off his foot, for the place where he stood was holy. It was God's land, and the Captain of the Lord's host is there. Every purpose of God for the future culminates in Christ to-day and every thought of God is already effectuated in Him. We are shut up to Christ. The moment we have the Captain of the Lord's host we have to take account of this: the ground is holy. That is the point of conflict: the land. What follows is the Lord's host, that which answers in Christianity to christian warriors. We find that nothing was used but the testimony of Christ. The priests went forward, the armed men in front of them. The armed man is the warrior with the divine panoply, the priest represents the measure of our approach to God, but the christian warrior and the priest are one to-day in the divine testimony.

And the battle is not ours. We may through God's grace have entered upon it at great cost—and yet blessed cost—we may have stepped forward in simple affection to find our place in God's warfare, and have found indeed what are the wiles, the

military strategy, of the evil one, but we have the power of God for us. The battle is the Lord's, and Christ is the great Leader of His people. He could do it all alone if He would, but He will have His saints with Him in such a way that Satan will not be able to challenge His people, and will find no way to get his inflamed darts in.

The shouting time comes and the great public victory is manifest. (Josh. vi. 20.) Our part to-day is to trust God and to see that no part of the armour is lacking individually, and then to go forth in fighting rank for God in defensive and offensive attitude just as far as God sees fit to work through us. Soon Christ will come out, and He will put on vengeance as a cloak, and the whole power of the enemy will be publicly overthrown.

Meanwhile we have the closing salutation of the Epistle to the Ephesians: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption." That is the moral result God will produce in His saints: loving our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption.

May God grant it to all of us!



THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

JUDGES V. 19, 20, 31.

ESTHER X. 3.

ROMANS XVI. 20.

REVELATION XII. 7-11; XVI. 12-16; XVII.
12-14; XIX. 6-21; XX. 1-10.

WE have covered a considerable amount of scripture in connection with the phase of the divine war on which we may fix our attention for a short time to-night; it is practically the final phase of the great war of God, and it offers a solution to every unsettled question among men. In Psalm ii. the question is asked: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." God's saints on this earth know what men do not know; there is no statesman alive to-day who could forecast the future for six months; the position of things in the world is one of intense strain; peace reigns publicly, but it is an armed peace, a peace which the slightest movement

among men may disturb in one moment ; the great so-called christian nations are arming to the teeth and no one knows why ; all the rulers are trembling, and no one can possibly forecast the future. But the Christian is not in darkness ; he has positive light as to the future, and he is in light as to the present ; he knows that the Lord sits supreme upon the water-floods, and that everything is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows why the nations are arming, though they do not know themselves ; the chapters we read to-night will tell us why the nations will rage and what the outcome of all must be.

To get our thoughts in order in regard of this last phase of the war, we shall endeavour to look again at the four thoughts with which we have connected each aspect of it so far. What therefore is the divine presentation in the particular phase before us ? We may say that it is the presentation of Christ as the Faithful and True. Then as to the second thought : under what character is the great enemy of God and of Christ seen ? The answer which these scriptures will afford us is that he is that ancient serpent, the devil, and Satan. That we find in Revelation xx. 2 : " He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil,

and Satan;" there we have the great summing up of every one of the diabolical titles of that awful being. The point of conflict here is the earth, this earth on which you and I stand to-night. Then as to the moral result wrought out in God's saints, I take it that they are seen arrayed in bridal garments, garments in scripture ever signifying inward state, not merely what is without.

Having proceeded so far we may seek to weigh the scriptures in order. We will start with Revelation xix. and work from that. To take first of all the title of the Lord Jesus in verse 11: "He that sat upon the throne was called Faithful and True." I suppose this divine presentation stands in contrast to the failure of the church upon earth. The Lord Jesus having been here as Man, having died and risen again, entrusted His testimony in measure to His church upon earth; and we have all, as forming part of it, with shamefacedness to confess that we have miserably failed to hold things for Him during His absence. Espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin, the church in its public character has succumbed to the subtlety of Satan, and it has maintained its place neither in faithfulness nor in truth. So far as to the church viewed in responsibility, but on the

divine side we see everything held unfailingly in Christ, and at the close He is presented to our affections as the Faithful and the True. Nothing has come out of place in His hands; in faithfulness everything is unswervingly maintained, and in truth everything is held, so to speak, in its proper order by Him. How that should appeal to our affections! How different from our unfaithfulness do we see the Lord Jesus in His faithfulness to God! Blessed it is to turn from the downward step of the professing church from first love, the decline in its public place on earth, to Him in whom all is unfailingly held for God and His saints—to Him who is Faithful and True! We see Him here on a white horse, symbol of triumphant power. One of the greatest comforts to our hearts is to know that while we may see things going apparently wholly to the bad, victory is assured in Him; He has overcome through His death. That should not make us careless, but it should have the effect of drawing out our hearts to Him that they may be in accord with the character in which He presents Himself to us.

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Now I shall want to shew while we develop this chapter a little that the four previous

aspects of the war of God at which we have looked find their final solution at the end of the days. You will remember that we have already had in view the way in which Satan is seen as Pharaoh, then as Amalek, then in connection with Balaam, and finally in connection with the seven nations in the blessed land. If we take the first—that is, the aspect of Satan as prince of this world, and the divine presentation of Jehovah as a Man of war—we shall find the solution of it here. As to the divine presentation, we find it in Christ: "In righteousness he doth judge and make war." Let me say, to start with, that stands wholly in contrast to the wars of men. If we were to search the annals of human history, I fear we should not find from the outset to the very latest war that there has been a single righteous one. There have been wars of conquest and annexation, wars of rebellion, civil wars, and so on; but I do not think history can furnish one single war that can be characterised as righteous. The war of the Lord, however, is an absolutely righteous one, for it has only one end in view, and it is that end I want to reach to-night if I may, viz., *peace*. That war is directed first against the prince of this world, and at the end the prince of this world will head up in what

scripture calls "the beast"—the wild beast, terrible in power and majesty, and head of the consolidated nations of Europe, demoniacal in character, most mighty in power, and energised by Satan—the awful being who for a few short years will rule the destinies of Europe. We find the summing up of Pharaoh in him, and it is against him that the Faithful and True will make war in righteousness. What is his fate in that war? "And the beast was taken." We shall come to the culmination of his career when we speak of the false prophet.

Passing on to Amalek we find Jehovah is presented as the Lord my Banner—Jehovah-nissi. I will now refer for a moment to the last chapter of the book of Esther to shew the solution of things in connection with that aspect of the war. You will remember that in that particular phase the war was perpetual from generation to generation. What was connected with Amalek was rebellion against the voice of the words of the Lord: and the principle of rebellion has to be dealt with in unsparing judgment. A very plain commandment, "the voice of the words of the Lord," but they did not leave room for the human sentiment of Saul, and he rebelled at them. The Lord will have

war with Amalek, the rebellious, proud heart of man, from generation to generation. We have to face it in ourselves. Now one of the kingly descendants of Amalek was Haman; he was the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and in the book of Esther we find how he evidences the same traits as his notorious ancestor. In his hatred of the Jews he erects a scaffold on which to hang Mordecai, but in the government of God that is used to seal his own doom, and in Haman we may view the peculiar fate of the Amalek line of things. He is made first of all to do honour to the very man he hated, to bow the knee to him (Mordecai being typical in that way of Christ), and to proclaim his glory. He is then hanged on the very gallows which he had built for Mordecai. Now as to the divine presentation: that is given to us there in the picture of Mordecai. We see three things marking Mordecai, pointing forward to the final triumph of Christ in the victory over Amalek: (1) he is accepted of the multitude of his brethren; (2) seeking the wealth of his people; (3) speaking *peace* to all his seed. We may come into the good of that to-day in the measure in which the rebellious line of Amalek is judged now in our hearts; we may lay hold of Christ, who is the true

Mordecai, and gain the acceptance, wealth and peace which He speaks to His seed.

Now we pass on to the third aspect, Christ as the supreme Adversary against the beast and the false prophet. We see Him presented consistently with a drawn sword, whether to the false prophet in Numbers, or to Pergamos where evil is brought to light as having a place in the christian church. In the latter case He has a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth which is ever turned against the seduction of the false prophet. I have no doubt it works publicly and effectually in this last war, for "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword." (Rev. xix. 15.) It is very important to see that every enemy of God right down the centuries will meet his doom at the hands of Christ when He comes forth in His glorious appearing. To-day that sharp sword is working in you and me to produce self-judgment. Christians can judge themselves because they have the Spirit, and they have a divine standard; it is not merely their conscience, but the word of God, living and operative—nay, it is a divine Person practically. Christ is the Word of God, as we see in this chapter, and the sharp sword that cometh out of His mouth

is the Word of God too; by it He overcomes the false prophet. We traced the doom of the latter in 2 Thessalonians ii.: "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth"—there we have another symbol of the Word of God—"and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

Revelation xix. 20 puts the false prophet in company with the beast: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image." The working of the false prophet was to lay the people open to the judgment of God, and we find here that "these both [the beast and the false prophet] were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." Isaiah xiv. draws the picture: as that awful being descends alive into the depths of hell, the lost kings of the earth (those who were there before him) say, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?" Yes; that is the closing up of man's pride and of man's glory, but what it brings into blessed prominence is the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Word of God—"His name is called The Word of God." The

Word of God is greater than every foe; Christ as the expression of God will deal with everything that is contrary to God, and meanwhile its operation in you and me is living and powerful as a sharp sword, producing in us what it will publicly do among the nations by-and-by; it discriminates between the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. As we come under the power of the Word of God, just so far we shall be able to avail ourselves of the priestly grace of Christ. The Word of God is God in expression, and that must ever be living; it cannot be put into a mould. God has put Himself once and for ever in expression to men in Christ, and when God speaks my soul responds—it comes under the sense of the living Word of God, it appreciates Christ in some fresh way, and that produces self-judgment and movement Christwards.

I pass on to the fourth aspect. We see there the Captain of the Lord's host, and the opposition against him under the figure of the seven nations—the world rulers of this darkness, principalities and powers in heavenly places. We see also the armour of God as defensive and offensive, preserving the saints in absolute and unbounded con-

fidence in God. Now in Revelation xii. we shall find the solution of this conflict on the divine side in Christ as the man child caught up. In days of lawlessness in Israel the prayer of Hannah was that she might have a man child, one strong enough to deal with the situation, and she received Samuel. He it was who hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah. In Revelation xii. we see a woman—typically Israel—travailing in birth till she be delivered. The whole course of things is presented here in one sign, out of which the man child is born, and her child, he who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, was caught up to God and His throne. The result is that the dragon and his angels are cast out of heaven. There is the agonizing desire to receive One who can cope with the enemy and bring in deliverance, but the deliverance must come from heaven, and the man child is first caught up there. Here we have the actual fulfilment of what was typified in the seven nations in Canaan. They pictured to us the completeness of spiritual evil as being seven in number, but the armour with which the saints are invested is a sevenfold armour, divinely perfect, and capable of resisting and overcoming the whole phalanx of evil directed against God.

The next thing we read is, "Michael and

his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought and his angels." The conflict is not at all uncertain, for it goes on to say, "and prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in heaven." It is a matter of rejoicing for the saints. The awful world rulers of this darkness, who direct the affairs of men in this enlightened twentieth century, stand, I have no doubt, in imitation of the divine ordering of which we read in Daniel. Satan has imitated what is of God, and in the end he will direct these powers against God ; but in the war of heaven they are cast out, nevermore to direct the affairs of men. Their place is found no more in heaven—and why ? It is that the church may publicly occupy that place, that she may there set forth every holy principle of divine rule to the universe, and become the centre of every benign influence and blessing for men. Then is cast out the old serpent, called the devil and Satan ; the great adversary which deceived the whole world is cast out to the earth, and his angels are cast out with him. Now comes the solemn triumph : "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." How incessant, how

vehement are the accusations of the enemy! They never cease. How is he overcome? How simple it all is: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Do we cleave to that? Are we unswervingly faithful to the death of Christ, the one foundation of Christianity?—"By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." That has to say to us to-day, for I cannot doubt it points to the near future. Saints must hold fast by the atonement of Christ and by the testimony of God, and what must mark them is that they love not their lives unto the death. Are we prepared to die for God's testimony? If so, we are prepared to live for it, and perhaps that is a great deal more difficult—to know the pressure and the incessant malignant attacks of Satan against all who seek to stand for it—but oh, to have part in that victorious conflict by which the saints will for ever cast him out! That blessed man child will rule the nations with a rod of iron for their blessing. I just touch on this to shew the summing up of these four aspects which we have previously considered.

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We may now dwell a little on the chapter before us (xix.). It will be an awful moment

when heaven is opened. Heaven is opened morally to-day; a divine Person has come out from heaven, and the heavens cannot close upon Him. I refer to the Spirit. Every saint who gets the Spirit has a direct avenue to Christ in heaven, available to faith in the power of the Spirit. But when the material heavens are opened, which to-day in their blue depths veil the divine presence, and men's shuddering eyes behold those depths unveiled and Christ coming forth, what a fearful thing for the earth then! He comes to make war, and on His head are many diadems, the insignia of empire. There will be gathered up on the brow of Christ not only the fillet which marked the Roman empire, but that of the whole universe—every diadem of majesty and of empire will be upon His brow, and He will have a name written which no one will know but Himself. What will remain divinely true is the inscrutability of His Person; we can know Him as in manhood, for He became Man, but in the depths of His Person He is inscrutable. All that He is as Man is open for the adoration of all who love Him, but what He is as divine will be for ever beyond their reach: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." That is unqualified; He has a name which

no one knows but Himself. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." Isaiah lxiii. raises the question, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" It speaks of unsparing judgment, and the answer is given by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: He had trodden the wine-press of the wrath of God. His armies also are with Him, and they are the poor suffering saints of to-day, too feeble perhaps to be regarded as really worth considering in this world. Yet they will constitute the armies of heaven, and they will follow Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen.

Just let me pause for one moment to shew the point of conflict. I have said that it is the earth. It may surprise some that in Christianity one should speak of the earth, but God is never going to give it up. It is a very important fact. God's saints do not belong to the earth but they have the greatest possible interest in it, for it belongs to God, and in the book of Revelation we learn how rebellious man publicly claims the earth. Why do the peoples rage? Because man claims the earth. But God will wrest it from man.

Now as to the moral result wrought in the

saints: they are clothed with bright garments. It is the vindication of their course here; they are bridal garments: "His wife hath made herself ready," involving that the affections are stretched out towards Christ, and are put in order by the Spirit of God, and God's answer is that she is granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright—she comes forth in public righteousness, as being in full accord with the righteous judgments of the Lamb.

The point of conflict being the earth will lead us to chapter xix. 17: an angel standing in the central point of authority of the universe. "He cried with a loud voice . . . to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God." God will never allow corruption before Him. If you read the final battle of the nations in the prophets you will find there that there are those sent throughout the land to gather any bone and bury it. God will not allow carrion in His sight, and before this great battle is proposed by men and before Christ goes forth in righteousness to make war, God calls upon the vultures of the earth to come and remove the carrion. Three unclean spirits will go out to deceive the kings of the earth. That is why the nations are armed. We find here

the great nations of the earth in one confederacy, under one great head, the beast. In their inveterate hatred of God, their pride and insolence against heaven, they gather together to make war against Him that sits on the horse and against His army. We can scarcely conceive that man's pride and rebellion will rise to such heights, but undoubtedly they will. The whole armaments of Europe will be gathered together in mighty insolence against God to make war with heaven. Do you wonder that great navies are being built? that the whole world is raising and drilling huge standing armies? Scripture does not wonder, and it tells us why and what will happen. We find in Revelation that first of all the great river Euphrates will be dried up; God will remove the barrier between East and West, and men will all no doubt find one common bond of hatred against God and His Christ, and the devil will send his spirits forth, working miracles, to gather the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of God the Almighty. The chivalry of Europe, its magnificent armaments, will be centred in and around the holy land. What is to be the effect upon you and me? Are our hearts caught by what is around? Do we take pleasure in the great navies of the

world? Do our spirits swell with pride in contemplation of the martial character of the world's armaments? "Behold, I come as a thief." All who are caught with these things will be taken unawares, but "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." What are you putting your trust and confidence in? The armies and navies of this world will all go to pieces, and if we put our trust in them we shall go to pieces too; we shall lose our garments and they will see our shame. "Blessed is he that keepeth his garments"—and that awful parenthetical warning is given in the very face of Armageddon. "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Chapter xvii. tells us what happens: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." How tersely scripture puts it! In chapter xix. we read: "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." Will there be a great battle? There will be no battle. The moment man's rebellious heart rises to that climax, that moment man will be crushed for ever. "And the beast was taken." That is all. Taken

as in a snare—caught like the wild animal he is—just taken and cast headlong. That will be the end of this world's glory, and will close up the chapter of man's might and magnificence. Then God will call in His vultures and remove the carrion from His sight. The raging of the nations will have ceased—nay, it will have sunk into the silence of hell. The wrath of man who said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," will have given way under the mocking laugh of Him who sitteth in the heavens and who has them in derision. Both the beast and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Then what will take place? I can tell you, for there have been many foreshadowings of the issue of God's battle. In Mark iv. 39 we read that Christ arose and "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea,

Peace, be still."

The wind indicates the Satanic activity upon the sea of the nations, and we find Christ in His majesty breathing peace over the whole scene. Christ is not interfering publicly to-day with the nations, He is letting them take their course, He is quiescent for the moment ;

but soon He will arise, and He will say unto the sea, "Silence; be mute". (lit., become muzzled)! As the great wild beast of the nations opens its jaws to swallow the testimony of God, Christ commands it to be muzzled, and when He speaks peace, Satan will rear his head no more. "The wind ceased, and there was a *great calm*." Judges v. tells us, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years." It was a forty years' calm then, but it is a thousand years here—Satan, the devil, curbed and bound, and a thousand years of blessed peace upon this earth under the righteous rod of iron of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Faithful and True.

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And then once more, spite of the most blessed government man has ever been under—a King ruling in righteousness and princes decreeing justice—the wicked heart of man, goaded on by Satan released for a brief moment, will once more revolt against God. That is the final war, scripture says but little about it, but Satan will go forth once more to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle.

The object of their hatred will be the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but it only ushers in the final doom of the great enemy of God, and closes up for ever the war of the Lord.

All this is for us in moral power to-day; the very heavens are close at hand and He who is the Faithful and True is available for us. Every aspect of the war of the Lord must produce in us moral results. If we first of all learn experimentally the death of Christ, and come into the appreciation of the blood of the Lamb, we shall range ourselves under the Lord as our Banner. Then we shall seek to cover the people of God like Phinehas. Then, as we saw in the fourth aspect, the world rulers of this darkness will be set aside by the moral state wrought in us; and finally, as here, as Christ speaks to us, bridal affections and bridal garments will be wrought in and for us and the saints will be invested with them to come forth with Him to share in His final victory. Then, as I said, the whole aim and result of the war will be brought about: Christ will arise in mighty power and silence the adversary. He will speak to the nations these words of majestic power: "Peace, be still!" and there will be a great calm. The tranquillity of that

calm should be known in the heart of every saint to-day that loves His appearing.

“*The God of peace* shall shortly bruise Satan under your feet.” He is the God of peace; divine wrath has peace in view. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us. Amen.

P. R. M.

