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# **STUDIES**

## **IN THE**

# **SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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## CONTENTS

Selling	2
The Prayers of the Apostles.. <i>68. 2 Peter 1:2-3</i>	5
The Life and Times of Joshua <i>48. Victory, Part 2</i>	8
The Doctrine of Revelation <i>32. In Glory, Part 5</i>	12
Glorious Sinai	16
Welcome Tidings	20

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*Studies in the Scriptures* appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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## SELLING

“Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23). There are three things to be attended to in those words. First, a needful act to be performed—“buy”; second, an invaluable object to be acquired—“the truth”; third, a solemn prohibition to be observed—“sell it not.” The first two have already been before us; the third is now to engage our attention. As many distinct things are implied and imported in the “buying” of a spiritual object, so a number of different things are included in the figure of “selling.” As the “buy” is a figurative term to express desire, to seek, and make your own; so “sell it not” signifies despise it not, value it not lightly, grow not tired of it, and do not part with it, no matter how you may be induced by temptation to do so. At first sight, such an interdiction may strike us as strange and unnecessary: if the truth was valued and sought by us, surely we shall not now disesteem and discard it. Alas, the human heart is very unstable and its affections fickle. First love is easily lost. When the novelty of a thing wears off, enthusiasm usually wanes. Moreover, Satan hates the truth and fiercely assails those who buy it.

The Jews “were willing *for a season*” to rejoice in John the Baptist’s light (Joh 5:35). Even Herod revered our Lord’s forerunner, and listened to him—“and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mar 6:20)—yet soon after, consented to the beheading of him. When the truth became incarnate (Joh 14:6), what crowds first attended His preaching, yet later they cried, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him” (Joh 19:15)! Nor was it any better with those who became His regular attendants and adherents, for we are told, “Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66). Scripture contains many pertinent examples and solemn warnings for us to heed. Paul had to lament: “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Ti 4:10); and to the Galatians, who had turned against him, the apostle wrote, “For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal 4:15-16). What a sad picture is presented in Isaiah 59:14: “And judgment [discretion] is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street.” How accurately that portrays present-day conditions: Truth *sold*—rejected, cast away as worthless, trodden underfoot!

If we compare other passages of God’s Word where “selling” is in view, it will the better enable us to understand the meaning and scope of the word “sell” in our text. Thus, “He [Esau] sold his birthright unto Jacob” (Gen 25:33), valuing it so lightly that he bartered it “for one morsel of meat” (Heb 12:16). Alas, how many preachers do likewise, sacrificing the truth for personal considerations: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise [literally, ‘a trade’] of you” (2Pe 2:3). Elijah made this charge against Ahab: “Thou hast *sold thyself* to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1Ki 21:20). Lust-ing after Naboth’s vineyard, he listened to the evil counsel of his wife Jezebel and lost his soul in securing a piece of ground. In the days of Ahaz, the children of Judah: “And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and *sold themselves* to do evil” (2Ki 17:17)—that is to say, they gave themselves up willingly to Satan to be his slaves. Judas, the betrayer, sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

From the case of Esau, we see how that some esteem divine things so lightly that they prefer the gratification of their carnal appetites. From the case of Ahab, we learn that others allow the spirit of covetousness to make them blind to their own interests and ready to listen to the advice of the wicked, and so call down upon themselves the judgment of God. From the case of the children of Judah, we behold how that following the ways of the heathen issues in a fatal sale, which brings completely under the power of the devil. From the case of Judas, we are warned that even those who have enjoyed the highest spiritual privileges, and received the truth from the lips of Christ Himself, are in danger of betraying their trust. In addition to these examples, it should be pointed out that many have been guilty of selling the truth through a desire to maintain peace at any price. They rightly dislike controversy, but they wrongly preserve silence when it is their duty to “earnestly contend [yet not bitterly] for the faith” (Jude :3). The wisdom which is from above is “first *pure*, then peaceable” (Jam 3:17). Peace, like gold, may be bought too dearly. That unity which is bought by the sacrifice of any part of the truth is worthless.

None boasts so loudly of her unity, such as it is, as Rome, yet it is a product of *selling the truth*: taking the Bible away from the people, prohibiting the right of private judgment. While no real Christian will sell the truth in the absolute sense, yet he is prone to sacrifice “the *present* truth” (2Pe 1:12). There is some particular aspect of truth which the enemy more especially assails in each generation; and it is those

controverted portions of it, those articles of the faith which are being opposed, that we most need to be on our guard against selling or renouncing. Again, any professing Christian who continues knowingly to listen to false doctrine is guilty of selling the truth and of disobeying its Author, for He expressly bids him, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Pro 19:27). He who is indifferent to what he hears from the pulpit places no value on the truth! Then "take heed *what* ye hear" (Mar 4:24). Thus, "sell it not" includes that we "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:13); but rather that we "ask for the *old* paths, where is the *good way*, and walk therein," and then "shall [we] find rest for our souls" (Jer 6:16).

It remains to point out that the negative implies the positive: thus, when it is said of Christ, "a bruised reed shall he not break" (Isa 42:3), it also intimates the tender care with which He supports and nourishes it. The sword of the Spirit is *two-edged*: where any evil is forbidden, the opposite good is to be understood as being enjoined; as on the other hand, where a duty is commanded, everything contrary to it is virtually forbidden. Hence, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" (Exo 20:7; Deu 5:11) also imports, Thou shalt hold it in the utmost honour and reverence. And "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13; Deu 5:17) comprehends, Thou shalt do all in thy power to preserve life. Consequently, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Pro 23:23) signifies "*stand fast*, and hold the traditions [oral ministry] which ye have been taught, whether by word [of mouth], or our [first] epistle" (2Th 2:15). "*Continue* in the faith grounded and settled" (Col 1:23). No matter what be the temptation to compromise, to be cowardly, or to act from selfish ends, "that which ye have already *hold fast* till I come" (Rev 2:25).

In conclusion, let us offer a few comments upon our text as a whole: "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Go to some pains in making sure that what you obtain *is* "the truth," and that involves our praying with David, "Teach me thy statutes" (Psa 119:12), and an emulating of the noble Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to ascertain whether what they heard accorded with that holy Standard (Act 17:11). One reason why God permits so much error and confusion in the religious world is to *test souls*, and make it evident who are the ones who honestly desire, highly value, and diligently seek the truth. "Truth is that with which the heart must be girded and governed, for without it, there can be no good works"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). It is those who acquire truth *cheaply*—second-hand, from others—who part with it *readily*; as the old adage says: "Lightly come, lightly go." In reality, we possess no more truth than that which actually possesses *us*, which has become part of our experience and practice, our "shield and buckler" (Psa 91:4). Those who suffered martyrdom rather than deny the faith refused to sell the truth! "*Prove* all things; *hold fast* that which is good" (1Th 5:21) supplies a parallel with our text.



## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 2 Peter 1:2-3

This lengthy series of articles on prayer would be lacking in completeness if we took no notice of the benedictions with which the apostles (James excepted) prefaced their epistles. Those opening salutations were very different from a mere act of politeness, as when the chief captain of the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem wrote a letter after this manner: "Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting" (Act 23:26). Far more than a courteous formality were their introductory addresses, yea, even than the expressions of a kindly wish. Their "Grace be [to] you...and peace" (2Jo 1:3) was a *prayer*, an act of worship, in which Christ was always addressed in union with the Father. It signifies that a request for these blessings had been made before the Throne. Such evinced the warm affection in which the apostle held those to whom he wrote, and breathed forth his spiritual desires in their behalf. By putting this at the forefront, it made manifest how powerfully his own heart was affected by the goodness of God unto them.

That which is now to engage our attention may be considered under the following heads: First, the *matter* of the prayer: "Grace and peace"—those were the blessings besought of God. Second, the *measure* of their bestowment: "be multiplied unto you." Third, the *medium* of their conveyance: "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Fourth, the *motive* prompting the request: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2Pe 1:2-3). Before filling in that outline or giving an exposition of those verses, let us point out (especially for the benefit of young preachers, *how* a verse should be pondered) what is *implied and imported* by this prayer.

In the apostle's seeking from God such blessings as these for the saints, we are taught: First, that none can merit anything at the hands of God, for grace and merits are opposites. Second, that there can be no real peace apart from grace: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa 57:21). Third, that even the regenerate stand in need, constant need, of grace from God. Fourth, therefore they should be vile in their own eyes. If we would receive more from God, then we must present our hearts to Him as empty vessels. When Abraham was about to make request of the Lord, he demeaned himself as "dust and ashes" (Gen 18:27), and Jacob acknowledged that he was "not worthy of the least of [His] mercies" (Gen 32:10). Fifth, such a request as that was a tacit confession of the utter dependence of believers upon God's bounty, that He alone could supply their need. Sixth, in asking for grace and peace to be "multiplied" unto them, acknowledgment was made that not only the beginning and continuance of them, but also their increase, proceeded from the good pleasure of God. Seventh, intimation was hereby given that we may "open [our] mouth wide" (Psa 81:10) unto God. Yea, it is an ill sign to be contented with a little grace. "He was never good that doth not desire to grow better"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

A word needs also to be said upon the character of the book in which this particular prayer is found. Like all *second* epistles, this one treats of a state of affairs where false teaching and apostasy had a more or less prominent place. One of the principal differences between his two epistles is that whereas in his first, Peter's main design was to strengthen and comfort his brethren amid the suffering to which they were exposed from the profane (heathen) world (see our February article), he now graciously warns (2Pe 2:1, 3:1-3) and confirms (2Pe 1:5, 10, 3:14) them against a worse peril from the professing world, from those *within* Christendom who menaced them. In his first epistle, Peter had represented their great "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion" (1Pe 5:8); but here, without directly naming him, he appears as an angel of light, but in reality, the subtle serpent: no longer persecuting, but seeking to corrupt and poison them through false teaching. In the second chapter, those false teachers are denounced as men who denied the Lord that bought them (2Pe 2:1), and as licentious (verses 10-14, 19), giving free play to their carnal appetites.

Those whom the apostle addressed are described as "them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:1). By "faith" is here meant that act of the soul whereby the truth is savingly apprehended. Their faith is declared to be "precious," for it is one of God's choicest gifts and the immediate fruit of His Spirit's regenerating power. This is emphasized in the expression "have obtained," which is the same Greek word as in Luke 1:9: "his *lot* was to burn incense," and again in John 19:24, "let us...*cast lots* for it." Thus, these saints were reminded that they owed their saving faith not to any superior sagacity of theirs, but solely to the allotments of grace. It had been with them as with Peter himself: a *revelation* had been made to them, not by flesh and blood, but by the heavenly Father (Mat 16:17). In the dispensing of God's favours, a blessed portion had fallen to their share,

even “the faith of [His] elect” (Ti 1:1). The “them” were Gentiles, and the “us” Jews. Their faith had for its *object* the perfect righteousness of Christ their Surety, for “through the righteousness of” is literally “*in* the righteousness of” the divine Saviour.

Having thus described his readers by their spiritual standing, Peter added his apostolic benediction, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It has not been sufficiently recognized that there is in these salutations a beautiful *blending* of the western and eastern forms of greeting: “Peace” was the more distinctive Hebrew blessing, and “grace” the more prominent Greek one. Those who have read the Old Testament attentively will remember how frequently and how uniformly “peace be unto thee” is found: see Genesis 43:23; Judges 6:23; 18:6, etc. “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” (Psa 122:7) shows it was a general term to denote *welfare*. From its use by the risen Saviour in John 20:19, we gather it was an all-inclusive summary of blessing. In contrast with the “Peace be unto you” of the Old Testament is the “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20; and compare 1Co 16:23; Gal 6:18; Rev 22:21), as the one commonly found in the New Testament. Hence, in this apostolic benediction, we see believing Jews and believing Gentiles are united in sharing the full blessing of God.

Having an earnest desire for their welfare, Peter sought for the saints the choicest bounties which could be conferred upon them, that they might be morally and spiritually enriched, both inwardly and outwardly. “Grace and peace” contain the sum of Gospel bestowments and the supply of our every need. Together they include all manner of blessings, and therefore, they are the most comprehensive things which can be requested of God. They are the choicest favours we can desire for ourselves, *and for our brethren!* They are to be sought by faith from God our Father, in reliance upon the mediation and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; both being communicated by the Holy Spirit—which is the reason why He is not here mentioned. “Grace and peace” are the very essence, as well as the whole of a believer’s true happiness in this life—hence the apostle’s longing that his brethren in Christ might abundantly partake of them.

“Grace” is not to be understood here in the sense of God’s favour, for these saints were already the objects thereof; nor of grace as an inward spiritual principle or “nature,” for that was imparted to them at the new birth. Rather was it a greater degree and manifestation of it, as in 2 Corinthians 12:9. It was a request that there should be further exercises and discoveries of God’s benignity unto them. Scripture distinguishes between “the grace of God, and the gift by grace” (Rom 5:15), as it also informs us that “he giveth more grace” (Jam 4:6). Though the fundamental meaning and reference of “grace” be to the free favour of God, the term is often used in a wider sense to include all those blessings which flow from His sovereign kindness; and it is to be so understood in the apostolic benedictions—a prayer for the continued and increased expression and manifestation of the same. “And peace.” The two benefits are fitly joined together, for the one is never found without the other—without grace, there can be no solid and durable peace. The former is God’s good will unto us; the latter is His grand work in us. In proportion as grace is communicated, peace is enjoyed. Grace to sanctify the heart; peace to comfort the soul.

“Peace” is one of the principal fruits of the Gospel as it is received into a believing heart, being that tranquility of mind which arises from the sense of our acceptance with God. It is not an objective but a subjective peace which is here in view. “Peace with God” (Rom 5:1) is *judicial*, being what Christ made for His people (Col 1:20), but faith conveys a reflex in the conscience of our amity with God. In proportion as faith rests upon the peace made with God by the blood of Christ and of our acceptance in Him will be our rest of soul. In and through Christ, God is at peace with believers, and the fruit or effect of this is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). But we are not in a capacity to receive and enjoy those blessings until we have surrendered to Christ’s Lordship and taken His yoke upon us. It is therefore “the peace of God [ruling] in [our] hearts” (Col 3:15) for which the apostles prayed, and *that* is the result of a Scriptural assurance of God’s favour and the maintaining of communion with Him by an obedient walk. It is also peace with *ourselves*. We are at peace with ourselves when conscience ceases to accuse us and our affections and wills submit themselves unto an enlightened mind. Furthermore, it includes concord and amity with our fellow Christians (Rom 15:5-6)—“The multitude of them that believed were of *one heart* and of *one soul*” (Act 4:32).

“Grace and peace” are the heritage of God’s people, and of them, Peter desired that they should enjoy very much more than a mere “sip” or taste. As 2 Peter 3:18 intimates, he longed that they should “grow in grace,” and that they might be filled with peace (compare Rom 15:13), and made request accordingly. His “be multiplied unto you” signified that larger and still more lavish displays of God’s goodness might be made unto them, both in its manifestations and in their apprehensions of the same; that an abundant supply

of grace and peace should be conferred upon them. They were already the favoured partakers of those divine benefits, but request was made for a plentiful increase of them. Spiritual things (unlike material) do not cloy in the enjoyment of them, and therefore, we cannot have too much of the same. "Peace be multiplied" intimates there are degrees of assurance, and that we never cease to be dependent upon free grace. The dimensions of this request teach us that it is our privilege to ask God not only for more grace and peace, but for an amplitude thereof. God is most honoured when we make the largest demands upon His bounty. If there is straitness, it is in ourselves, and never in Him.

"Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." The careful reader, who is not too dilatory to compare passage with passage, will have observed a variation from the salutation used by Peter in his first epistle (1Pe 1:2). There he prayed, "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied"; the addition ("through the knowledge of God," etc.) made here being a significant one, in keeping with his altered design, and appropriate to his present aim. The student will also have noted that "knowledge" is one of the prominent words of this epistle (see 2Pe 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; 2:20, 21; 3:18). We should also consider how frequently the Saviour is designated "*our* Lord" (2Pe 1:11, 14, 16, etc.), in contrast with the graceless professors who submitted not unto His scepter. That "knowledge of God" is not a natural, but a spiritual one, not a speculative, but an experiential; nor is it simply of the God of creation and providence, but as a covenant God in Christ. This is evident from its being joined to or connected with "Jesus our Lord." It is therefore an evangelical knowledge of God which is here in view. He cannot be savingly known except in and through Christ: "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Mat 11:27).

In as much as this prayer was for grace and peace to be "multiplied" unto the saints "through [or more literally *in*] the knowledge of God," there was a tacit intimation that they would both abide and advance in that knowledge. "The more one advances in the knowledge of God, every kind of blessing increases also"—John Calvin (1509-1564) on this verse. A spiritual and experiential knowledge of God is the grand *means* by which all the influences of grace and peace are conveyed to us. God works upon us as rational creatures, agreeably to our intellectual and moral nature—knowledge preceding all else. As there is no real "peace" apart from grace, so there is no grace and peace without a saving knowledge of God, and no such knowledge of Him is possible but in and through "Jesus our Lord," for Christ is the channel by which every blessing is transmitted to the members of His mystical body. As the more windows a house has, the more light enters it, so the greater our knowledge of God, the greater our measure of grace and peace. But the evangelical knowledge of the most mature saint is only fragmentary and feeble, and admits of continual augmentation by the divine blessing upon those means which have been appointed to that end.

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2Pe 1:3). Therein the apostle found his *motive* for making the above request. It was because God *had* already wrought so wondrously for these saints that he was moved to ask Him to continue dealing lavishly with them. We may also regard this third verse as being brought in to encourage *the faith* of these Christians: that, since God had done such great things for them, they should expect further liberal supplies from Him. It will be noted that the inspiring motive was a purely evangelical one, and not a legal or mercenary. God had bestowed upon them everything needful for the production and preservation of spirituality in their souls, and the apostle longed to see them maintained in a healthy and vigorous condition. Divine power is the foundation of spiritual life, grace is what supports it, and peace is the element in which it thrives. "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" may also be understood as referring to life in glory: a right unto it, a meetness for it, and an earnest of it, had already been bestowed upon them. Finally, as the contents of verse 3 may also be regarded as the *ground* of the exhortation in verses 5 to 7...so the supply asked for in verse 3 should be regarded as the necessary *equipment* for the same.



## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 48. Victory, Part 2

Lack of space obliged us to conclude our July article abruptly—in the middle of indicating something of the typical teaching of the eighth chapter. We raised the query, What contribution does this incident of the capturing and destroying of Ai—following upon Israel's earlier repulse there—make to the principal theme of this book? Wherein does it contain valuable instruction for the Christian concerning his spiritual warfare? We pointed out the twofold difficulty involved in arriving at an answer: the fact that Israel had *missed God's* best, and because it is the human side of things, which is the more prominent—each of which renders it less easy to perceive the principles of operation. Because Israel were here enjoying only God's second best, His efforts on their behalf were curtailed: though He gave them victory, yet He wrought no open miracle for them—as He did both at the Jordan and Jericho. Because Israel had yielded to a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency (Jos 7:3), they were required to resort to humiliating tactics in order to conquer a weaker foe. When the human side of things has a larger place, it is harder to discern its inter-relation with the divine.

Taking the three leading events together, we see that God does not act uniformly, nor does He require His people mechanically to adopt the same line of procedure on all occasions. Entirely different tasks were assigned Israel in regard to the crossing of Jordan, the capturing of Jericho, and the conquest of Ai. This teaches us that we are to employ a variety of means and methods in the prosecution of our spiritual warfare. Different foes are to be tackled and overcome in different ways; yet in each case, there must be an entire submission to the revealed will of God, and full dependence upon Him for His blessing of our efforts—obeying His precepts and relying on His promises. Taking them in their broadest sense, Israel's crossing of the Jordan may be regarded as showing us how the most formidable *natural obstacles* may be overcome. The capturing of Jericho reveals the sufficiency of the *Gospel*, under God, to demolish the most powerful of the enemy's strongholds. The conquering of Ai indicates how *error* is to be vanquished.

In regard to the crossing of the Jordan, Israel were required to proceed along the path of duty so long as it was clear before them (Jos 3:2-3, 14-16); and then count upon God to remove that which impeded them, or make a way through it. They were bidden to advance with their eyes on the ark, in which were deposited the two tables of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. Because of their honouring His Law, God wrought a miracle for them. In connection with the capture of Jericho, Israel were ordered to carry the ark of the covenant before the congregation—to intimate that victory was to be looked for only from Jehovah. It adumbrated the triumphs of the Gospel—when faithfully preached and the power of an ungrieved Spirit attends the same (2Co 10:4). It was when the trumpets were sounded that the walls fell (Jos 6:20; and compare Joe 2:15 and 1Co 14:8). In keeping with what we have said above, when we seek its spiritual application to the Christian's warfare, Joshua 8 presents more difficulty, particularly in determining what Ai itself *stands for*. It may have more than one symbolical significance, but that which appears most likely to us is the destruction of error.

Among the considerations or reasons which have led us to regard Ai as standing for error are the following: First, because deviation from and opposition to the truth is one of the most powerful forces against which the minister of the Gospel has to contend; and therefore, it is to be expected that there should be some prefiguration of the same in the book of Joshua. Second, because "Ai" signifies "a heap of ruins," which aptly describes Satan's perversions of the truth. Third, because of the *strategy* there appointed. Ai was not overthrown by a frontal assault, but by an ambush which seized it from the rear. And error is overthrown not by a direct attack upon it, but by an indirect. Would that this were more widely recognized and heeded today. The way to dispel the darkness is to turn on the light! Souls are delivered from the snares of the devil not by attempting to refute his lies, but by giving them the truth. Christ gave His apostles no commission to expose the sophistries of paganism, but commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature. When they complained that the Pharisees were offended at His teaching, He said, "Let them alone" (Mat 15:12-14). Their business was not to pluck up "tares," but to sow the Word. The only divinely appointed method of fighting Russelism, Romanism, and any other -ism, is by fully declaring "all the counsel of God" (Act 20:27)!

Turning from the corporate bearing of this incident to the *individual application*, the following are inculcated: 1. Do not attempt to meet Satan on his own ground, but draw him out into the open—the Light. 2.



Previous defeats may be turned into successes if we humble ourselves before God and submit to His directions, particularly mortifying the spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance. 3. Certain of our enemies are not conquered by a direct attack on them, but rather by an indirect: that is to say, some of our lusts are best overcome by developing the contrary graces—as timidity by cultivating a spirit of boldness, impatience by fostering a spirit of perseverance. 4. Beware of underestimating the strength of the enemy and imagining that a half-hearted effort on your part will suffice: it was through doing this that Israel met with defeat in their original venture against Ai. 5. Ever be seeking to turn to your advantage a knowledge of how the enemy will act. 6. Be alert and swift to seize a favourable opportunity (Jos 8:19). 7. The pastor cannot secure your inheritance: *you* have to fight for it—“all” (Jos 8:1). Yet the pastor has no right to expect his members to succeed, unless he has given them full instructions how to act.

There is also much comfort here, as well as instruction for the soldiers of Christ: 1. When we have suffered a serious setback (Jos 7:4-5) and have contritely humbled ourselves before the LORD (verses 6-9), His Word unto us is “fear not, neither be thou dismayed” (Jos 8:1); and thus, we may return to the conflict with renewed confidence. 2. We are divinely assured of final victory from the outset (verse 7), so that no matter what repulses may be met with, we must not lose heart. 3. We have the advantage of knowing beforehand how the enemy will act (verses 5-6), and should therefore conduct ourselves accordingly. 4. The antitypical Joshua is with His people by night (verse 9), as well as day; and consequently, He not only “giveth his beloved sleep” (Psa 127:2), but *guards* them, so that He makes them “dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8). 5. God exerts both a restraining (Jos 8:14) and an impelling power (verse 16) upon our enemies, which is greatly to our advantage. 6. God can be absolutely relied upon to make good His promises (verses 18, 26), and this should be the stay of our hearts in the darkest hours. 7. He rewards our obedience (verse 27) both in this life and in that which is to come.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand” (Jos 8:18). The next verse makes it clear that the LORD had previously instructed His servant so to do; and thus, He now only renewed the order, indicating thereby that the moment had arrived for him to start the actual engagement. And thus it ever is: the Lord will not fail any who are truly submissive unto and dependent upon Him, but will give the needful word of direction and assurance just when it is required. But why should the LORD now say unto Joshua, “For I *will give* it into thine hand,” when He had previously declared, “I *have given* into thy hand the king of Ai,” etc. (verse 1)? There is nothing inconsistent between the two statements: the former respected His decree; and the latter referred to the execution of the same. Likewise, Christ spoke of those whom the Father *had* given Him (Joh 17:9, 11) by electing grace; and also, “All that the Father *giveth* me [by actual regeneration] shall come to me” (Joh 6:37). “And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city” (Jos 8:18), complying promptly with the divine injunction.

“And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire” (Jos 8:19). The outstretching of Joshua’s spear was evidently the pre-arranged signal for this part of his army to act, for upon his so doing, they immediately arose from the place of their concealment. It shows that they had kept their eyes fixed steadfastly upon their leader, as we also are bidden to do (Heb 12:2). It was in that way they had responded to his original injunction, “Be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4). They carried out their appointed task with the utmost dispatch. Observe how the Holy Spirit has recorded the promptitude of their actions, making mention of their alacrity no less than three times in this verse; thereby indicating the pleasure which God takes in the saints running in “the way of [His] commandments” (Psa 119:32). This was clearly a case where speed was called for. They had waited long, and now was the moment to make themselves masters of the city. When the course of duty is clear, we must not be guilty of delay or tardiness.

Not only is the promptitude of these men of the ambush emphasized, but the preciseness and completeness of their obedience is chronicled too. No sooner did they capture Ai than they set the city on fire, just as they had been ordered to do (Jos 8:8). Having met with no opposition or difficulty in occupying Ai, they did not then sit down and take things easily, but paused not until they had carried out the whole of Joshua’s instructions. That too points an important lesson for us. When God has graciously granted our efforts a measure of success, there must be no slackening in the good fight of faith: rather should gratitude unto Him stir us to strive after yet fuller conformity to His revealed will. Especially does this apply to the veterans in Christ’s army, who, because of advancing years and increased infirmities, are tempted to rest on their oars. There is no such thing as remaining stationary in the spiritual life: if we do not continue going

forward, we inevitably slide backward. Let elderly pilgrims prayerfully ponder the example of the aged apostle in Philippians 3:12-14.

“And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers” (Jos 8:20). Now that it was too late to remedy their previous carelessness (“wist not”—verse 14), they gave some attention to their rear, only to discover that their homes were blazing. What they now beheld filled them with consternation, for they realized the hopelessness of their plight. So panic-stricken were they, their spirits sank—“they had no power to flee.” That too was “of the LORD,” though He used such means as the horror evoked by seeing their houses alight and the turning round of Joshua and his men. In like manner, the lost sinner is reduced to a similar state of impotence, anguish, and despair, when, with nothing but a mis-spent life to look back upon—now reduced to smoke—the hour of divine Judgment falls upon him.

“And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai” (Jos 8:21). This is both an amplification and explanation of the last clause of the preceding verse. The smoking houses of Ai made it plain to Joshua and the force that was with him that the ambush had made themselves masters of the city, and that they would now be able to advance and attack the Canaanites from their rear. Accordingly, Joshua and his men ceased their flight toward the wilderness, turned around, and fell upon their pursuers. As the former contingent had delayed not in performing the task allotted them, so the main body of Israel’s army acted with celerity. Thus, we observe again that the success of this strategy turned upon the co-operation and exact timing of the two forces. Had the ambush been tardy, Joshua and his men had been held up. So it is in the corporate warfare of Christians: one church needs to act in fellowship with and support of another. Until there is more unity among the Lord’s own people and concerted evangelical effort by them, there is no prospect of any improvement in moral, social, or international conditions.

“And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape” (Jos 8:22). The Canaanites were now “between two fires” or forces, so that they could not flee backward or forward. As there was no way of escape left them, so they had no spirit to resist (verse 20). “See how quickly, how easily, the scale turns against those who have not God on their side!”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). What a solemn illustration is here seen of that divine declaration: “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them” (Ecc 9:12). No quarter was shown the Canaanites (Jos 8:24): “God the righteous Judge had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of His justice and the executioners of His decree”—M. Henry. The indiscriminate destruction of male and female—young and old, at the flood, in Sodom, and here—demonstrated the universality of sin and guilt, that *all* are equally under the wrath of God, and that “*whosoever* was not found written in the book of life” will be “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).

Joshua’s men had evidently received instructions not to slay the king of Ai, for a more ignominious death was reserved for him. Accordingly, he was taken alive and brought to Joshua (Jos 8:23). Concerning him, we are told, “And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day” (verse 29). Thus, he fell not upon the field of battle while fighting valiantly, but met with the shameful end of a malefactor. Deuteronomy 21:23 solemnly explains this detail: “For he that is hanged is accursed of God” (compare Gal 3:13), so that this death of Ai’s king testified to his being the enemy of God and His people. His carcass being cast “at the entering of the gate of the city” added to his disgrace, for it was there that he had exercised his judicial authority (Ru 4:1; Dan 2:49; Amo 5:12). Verily, the “triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5).

In conclusion, let us point out to young preachers that the above incident may be used for a sermon to the unsaved, entitling it, “The Doom of the Reckless.” In the introduction, show that as Esau exemplified the doom awaiting the carnal and self-indulgent; Pharoah, the obdurate defier of God; Balaam, the lover of money—so Ai’s king, the *reckless*. The following points concerning the king of Ai should be developed: 1. He belonged to a race under the condemnation of God (Gen 9:25). 2. He resided in a city which signifies “a heap of ruins”—such is this world as the result of the fall. 3. He dwelt in a place marked out for destruction

(Jos 8:1-2; 2Pe 3:10). 4. At first, he appeared to be successful in fighting against God and His people (Jos 7:5; Ecc 8:11-12). 5. This gave him false confidence (Jos 8:6). 6. He failed to take the most elementary precautions—see last paragraph of our June article. 7. He was blind to his own interest and immediate danger (verse 14). 8. He influenced others to act rashly (verse 16). 9. He took no precautions against the supreme crisis (verse 17). 10. He died the death of the accursed. Application: there was no way of escape for him (verse 20); but there is for *you*—by heeding Jeremiah 29:13, and sheltering in Him who was made a curse for believers.



## THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

### 32. *In Glory, Part 5*

Though God has not given us the Scriptures in order to gratify an idle or carnal curiosity, yet it has pleased Him graciously to reveal sufficient in them to satisfy the spiritual aspirations and expectations of His people concerning the life to come; nevertheless, it is neither the prayerless nor the indolent who apprehend and enjoy much therein. In our previous studies, we have shown from the Word of truth that the saint dies in union and communion with the Lord, that an angelic guard of protection and honour conducts him to the Father's House on high, that he is there greeted by those believers whom he had befriended upon earth and who have entered before him into their inheritance, and that Christ Himself receives him and presents him faultless before the Throne of His glory with exceeding joy. We have seen that the company of the redeemed and our fellowship with them—yes, and with the holy angels also—constitutes a part of heaven's blessedness; yet that such privileges are entirely subordinate to the blissful communion we shall have with Christ Himself. The supreme and climacteric joy will be found in that One who occupies both the central and supreme Throne in heaven. Nor would any saint have it otherwise. *Christ* is the One who loved him and gave Himself for him; and therefore, He is not only his Saviour, his Beloved, but his "all" (Col 3:11).

Well might the Psalmist, under the Spirit of inspiration, exclaim: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee" (Psa 31:19). A part of that which God, in His eternal purpose, designed for His people, is entered into and enjoyed by them during their earthly pilgrimage; but far more is "laid up for them" for their eternal felicity. The good or best wine is reserved for the end—for the marriage feast (Joh 2:10)—and its inexpressible excellence is indicated by the "Oh how great"! Then it is that we shall participate in the consummation of God's "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3): we shall be as happy and blessed as it is possible for creatures to be. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:8-9). It is blessed to note that in the Hebrew word for "pleasures," there is the plural of "Eden." As Horne said: "In heaven alone, the thirst of an immortal soul after happiness can be satisfied. There the streams of Eden will flow again." To *drink of* that "river" (compare Rev 22:1), we understand to signify to be favoured with an unclouded knowledge of God and a pure affection to Him.

There are two of the divine titles which ought to appeal particularly unto believers: "The God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10) and "the God of glory" (Psa 29:3). The former is much the better known one, yet it is the latter which receives the most prominence in Scripture. There we read of "the Father of glory" (Eph 1:17), while the Son is styled, "the King of glory" (Psa 24:7) and "the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8); and the Comforter is termed "the spirit of glory" (1Pe 4:14). Those appellations speak not only of what God is in Himself essentially, but also of what He is in His relations and acts unto His dear people. As Samuel E. Pierce (b. 1827) pointed out, "The God of glory expresses what He hath prepared for us, what He will bestow upon us, and what He will be to us in the house eternal in the heavens." "Glory" imports an excellency (Mat 4:8), yea, a height of excellency (2Pe 1:17); and therefore, that place and state of blessedness into which believers enter immediately after death, and into which their Forerunner was "received," is designated "glory" (1Ti 3:16). It is striking to note that the Hebrew word (*tabod*) means both "weight" and "glory," as though telling us that what seems so nebulous unto men is that which alone possesses substance and solidity—explaining the apostle's expression, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" in 2 Corinthians 4:17.

"Glory" is connected with that which is exceedingly lovely to look upon, for when we read of "the *glory* of his countenance" (2Co 3:7), we know it was no ordinary beauty and radiance which illumined the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, but one that was too dazzling for the beholders to gaze upon, so that he had to cover it with a veil (Exo 34:35). So, too, Paul tells us that when the Saviour appeared to him on the way to Damascus, "there shone from heaven a great light round about me." No ordinary light was it, for he added: "I could not see for the *glory of that light*" (Act 22:6, 11). Thus it is in a heaven itself: the celestial city "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev 21:23). What then must be "the *riches* of his glory" (Eph 3:16)! During their sojourn here, believers are made partakers of "the riches of his *grace*" (Eph 1:7); but in the life

to come, God will “make known the riches of his *glory* on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:23)—and *they* are “his riches in glory by *Christ Jesus*” (Phi 4:19).

That a revelation of God in Christ unto His saints in glory will satisfy every longing of the renewed heart is implied in the request of Philip: “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (Joh 14:8)—for that is an indirect acknowledgment that there is such a sufficiency in viewing Him, as will be enough to completely content all the insatiable desires of the soul. Three tenses are used in connection with the saint’s absorption with Christ’s excellency: First, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we *beheld* his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), which is realized at our conversion, when a supernatural revelation of Christ is made to the heart. Second, “But we all, with open face *beholding* as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18), which is a progressive experience in the Christian’s life, as by the exercise of faith upon the personal and official perfections of Christ; and as they are set forth in the written Word and under the gracious agency of the Spirit, we are transformed, being assimilated to His holy image. Third, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they *may behold* my glory” (Joh 17:24), which is realized when they are removed from earth to heaven.

We are from our regeneration to our glorification, taking in Christ into our renewed understanding. It is but little that we now apprehend of Him, yet the least degree of spiritual apprehension of Him received into our hearts from the Word of truth renders Him more precious to us than the gold of Ophir. Imperfect though it be, yet even in this life, the genuine Christian has a real and solid, convincing and affecting knowledge of Christ. By the gracious operations of the Spirit, his faith is called into exercise in such a manner that it obtains both evidence and subsistence of the things of God in the soul (Heb 11:1). As the eye of the body conveys to the mind an image of the object beheld, so faith (which is the eye of the soul) takes in a true knowledge of Christ, so that He is “formed [within]” him (Gal 4:19). Thereby he procures as accurate a knowledge of His person as he ever will in heaven. When the believer shall see Christ “face to face” (1Co 13:12), it will be identically the same Person he formerly beheld by faith, through a mirror obscurely. It will be no stranger to whom he needs an introduction that the believer will meet with on high, but One whom he savingly knew here below, and with whom he enjoyed an all-too-brief, yet real and precious, fellowship.

Let there be no mistake upon this point: in *this* life, every born-again person experiences the truth of those words, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). That does not mean he will not desire a more complete knowledge of Christ, deeper draughts of His love, and sensible enjoyments of Him; but that a satisfying portion is now his. He “thirsts” indeed, yet not for any other portion, but for larger measures of it. He will never more be without that which will abundantly meet his every longing. The saints in heaven know *more* of Christ, but they do not know Him *more truly* than they did on earth. By the Spirit, the mind is enlightened to receive the true and saving knowledge of Christ, and we are brought to believe on Him with all our hearts. By Him, we are “given...an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20). The Spirit is graciously pleased to reveal Christ to us as He is set forth in the Word; nevertheless, each of us yearns with Paul “that I may know him”—more perfectly (Phi 3:10).

Further and grander manifestations of God will be enjoyed by saints in heaven than on earth, yet this will be different only in degree, and not in kind, from that which is vouchsafed His people in this life. It will indeed immeasurably exceed in fullness and clarity anything which they are now capable of enjoying, but for *substance*, it will be the same. Grace is glory in the bud; glory is grace in full fruition. The good wine of the kingdom is sampled by them now, but their cup of bliss will then be full to overflowing. Even here, the Spirit shows us “things to come” (Joh 16:13); but there, we shall enter into the full possession of them. That communion with Christ in glory which the redeemed enjoy at present, those refreshings in which they participate from the fountain of His love, are termed “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23)—samples of the harvest of blessedness awaiting them: as a cluster of the luscious grapes of Canaan was brought to Israel before they entered the Land (Num 13:23). Such experiences are also termed “the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Co 1:22). An “earnest” is a small token of the whole yet to come, a part payment of the thing itself; what we now enjoy is a foretaste of the coming feast.

“The fullness of the felicity of heaven may appear if we compare with it the *present* joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit. Such are they as that the Scripture styles them strong consolation (Heb 6:17), full joy

(Joh 15:11), joy unspeakable and full of glory (1Pe 1:8), and abounding consolation (2Co 1:5). And yet, all the joy and peace that believers are partakers of in this life is but as a drop to the ocean, as a single cluster to the whole vintage, as the thyme or honey upon the thigh of a bee to the whole hive fully fraught with it; or as the break and peep of day to the bright noontide. And yet these tastes of the water, wine, and honey of this celestial Canaan, with which the Holy Spirit makes glad the hearts of believers, are far more desirable and satisfactory than the overflowing streams of all earthly felicities. And there are none who have once tasted of them, but say as the Samaritan woman did: 'Lord, give me that water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.' (Joh 4:15). So also the first and early dawns of the heavenly light fill the soul with more serenity, and ravish it with more pure joy, than the brightest sunshine of all worldly splendour can ever do"—William Spurstow (1605?–1666), 1656.

To see God in His Word and works is the happiness of saints on earth; but to see Him in Christ face to face will be the fullness of their blessedness in heaven. None can doubt that the apostle Paul was favoured with the most intimate, exalted, and frequent communion with Christ down here; yet he declared that to depart and be with Him is "*far* better" (Phi 1:23). He did not say "to depart, and to be in paradise," but "to be with Christ"! So again, "absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8)—not "safe at home in heaven." From the earliest times, it was announced "*unto him shall the gathering of the people be*" (Gen 49:10). That receives a threefold fulfillment at least: at conversion, when they are drawn to Him by the power of the Father (Joh 6:44); in the assembly, to worship Him by the power of the Spirit (Mat 18:20); and at death or His return, when He brings them to Himself on high. "My beloved is gone down into his garden,...to *gather* lilies" (Song 6:2). Christ comes into His "garden" (the local church) sometimes to plant new lilies; at others, to crop; and also, to gather old ones to remove them into His paradise ("garden") above. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psa 50:5).

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (Joh 8:24). Too many of our moderns would postpone the realization of that request until the "Eternal State," but there is nothing in Scripture which intimates that the saints will have to await the resurrection morning ere they shall gaze upon their glorified Lord. It should be quite clear to the reader from all that we have set before him that the obscure, partial, and transient enjoyment of Christ which is his in this life is turned into a clear, full, perfect, and permanent enjoyment of Him immediately after death. The beatific vision will then be his—designated such because, having been freed from all the darkness and limitation which indwelling sin places upon the soul, he will then be able to take in his full measure of bliss. At first, his vision of Christ will be wholly spiritual and intellectual: after the resurrection, it will be corporeal also. In heaven, the Son will be seen in all the surpassing dignity and splendour of His person, His perfections shining forth in cloudless lustre. "Then how should believers long to be with Him! Most men need patience to *die*; a believer should need patience to *live*!"—John Flavel (1627-1691).

On high, the Christian will have an immediate, uninterrupted, and satisfying view of the Lord of glory. In Him, the Incomprehensible Three will be manifested in the uttermost display of Their excellencies, before all the holy angels and saints. It is *that* which will be the supreme blessedness of heaven, and which each believer shall for ever behold, filling him with such concepts of the divine glory as he can never express. He will be eternally admiring the same, rejoicing in it, having communion with God over it, praising Him for it. The heart will then be everlastingly fixed upon Christ as its Centre. The glory of Christ is very dear unto the saints. They have a spiritual perception of it now, but a far greater apprehension of it will be theirs when they are removed from this vale of tears and are "present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8). Then shall they behold the King in His beauty, and that supernatural sight shall be theirs for ever. Paul could go no higher than "so shall we ever be with the Lord." Not merely beholding His glory as spectators, but taken into intimate fellowship with the same.

How overwhelming must be the first open sight of Christ! What will be our feelings when, without any intervening medium, we shall behold the Son of God? Who can fitly visualize our first meeting with the eternal Lover of our souls? What stretch of imagination can comprehend the experience of soul as we behold Him who is "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16)? No doubt the Christian reader has, like this scribe, attempted to anticipate those moments when he will first gaze upon that blessed One whose visage was (through pain and suffering) more marred than any other's, but which now shines with a splendour exceeding that of the midday sun, and which will beam with love as He welcomes to Himself another of His redeemed. Doubtless, when we behold His glorified humanity, which is personally united to the divine na-

ture, and is exalted far above all principalities and powers, we shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise. If the wise men fell down and worshipped Him when they saw Him in the house as a “young child with Mary his mother” (Mat 2:11), what will be our feelings when we see Him seated upon the Father’s Throne? Such views shall we then have of His excellency as will satiate our souls with holy admiration and joy inexpressible.

Our efforts to anticipate that blissful experience will be aided somewhat if we bear in mind that we shall then be completely rid of sin and of selfishness of character, which mars even the regenerate in this life. “Every thing we now enjoy, though even of a spiritual nature, is tinged with *self*. If we contemplate the glories of God in His Trinity of Persons, as revealed to us in Christ; if we feel our souls going forth under the divine leadings of the Holy Spirit in sweet communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; if the soul be led to bless God, when at any time receiving love-tokens of pardon, consolation, strength, or any of the ten thousand times ten thousand marks of grace, like the dew from heaven, coming to us from the Lord; in all these, self and self interest is mingled. But there is an infinitely higher source of pure unmixed felicity, which the disembodied spirit will immediately enter upon when all selfishness is lost in the love of God”—Robert Hawker (1753-1827). There the soul will be lifted up above itself, absorbed entirely with God in Christ, independent of what He is *to* us and all that He has done *for* us.

Christ, the God-man Mediator, is the grand Centre of heaven’s blessedness and the all-ingrossing Object of its inhabitants. “In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev 5:6), and the hosts surrounding Him sing: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (verses 11-12). It is the contemplation of this most glorious Christ which will constitute the holiness and happiness of the saints for all eternity. To behold His beauty will be infinitely more than all the benefits we derive from Him. Our refined and enlarged intellectual and spiritual faculties will be so engaged with and exercised upon Him that it will be impossible for us to fall again into sin. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead personally. In and through Him, the Triune God is displayed before elect angels and saints, reflecting on them the full blaze of the divine perfections. It is a Christ “who [is] the brightness [effulgence] of [God’s] glory” (Heb 1:3) that we shall for ever enjoy. Christ is the Medium and Mirror in which the redeemed shall see God. “In Him we shall behold the manifestation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as far as the invisibility of the divine essence can admit of revelation” (R. Hawker)—and so far as finite creatures will be capable of apprehending it.

As all the glory of the sun is inherent in itself and is only apparently in the object it shines upon, so all the glory of heaven centres in Christ and is treasured up in Him for them—as all grace is (2Ti 2:1)—and He imparts it unto them. Our blessedness in heaven will not be independent of the Lord, but conveyed to us out of His fullness. “Christ’s glory, as the God-man, is that of the Godhead dwelling personally in Him. That glory is founded upon the union of the human nature with the nature of God. This glory breaks forth and shines through His human nature, as if the sun were encompassed with a case of clear crystal: how glorious would that crystal be!”—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680). Christ’s glory is so inherently and essentially in Himself that He is designated “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8), and His ineffable beauty will be so beheld by us as to be reflected upon us, as the countenance of Moses shone with a more-than-natural light after his communion with Jehovah. Christ has indeed an incommunicable glory, yet according to our capacity, *we* shall be partakers of the glory which the Father has “given” Him (Joh 17:22).



## GLORIOUS SINAI

We must now consider more definitely the *ceremonial* law, which was also given at Sinai by Jehovah unto Moses, and which consisted of the rites and ritual which were to govern Israel's religious life—or, as it is often designated, the Levitical code of worship. In the statutory "Judgments" of Exodus 21 to 23, very little mention was made of religious ordinances and ceremonies. The erecting of the altar (Exo 20:24-26) signified that sacrifices would form an essential part of their worship; and the appointing of the three great annual feasts, when all of Israel's males must appear before the LORD (Exo 13:14-16), announced God's claims upon them—but nothing more was said about the moral and spiritual side of life. Not until *after* the national covenant had been formally confirmed were instructions given concerning the tabernacle and all that pertained to its services. It is essential that *this* should be duly noted, for therein was a plain intimation given that the Levitical system was only of *secondary* importance in the theocracy. It had indeed a real and necessary place in connection with the constitution of the divine kingdom in Israel, yet certainly not that foremost and paramount one which many have erroneously supposed.

"God had already redeemed Israel for His peculiar people, called them to occupy a near relation to Himself, and proclaimed to them the great principles of truth and duty which were to regulate their procedure, so that they might be the true witnesses of His glory and the inheritors of His blessing. And for the purpose of enabling them more readily to apprehend the nature of this relation, and more distinctly realize the things belonging to it, the LORD instituted a visible bond of fellowship by planting in the midst of their dwellings a dwelling for Himself, and ordering everything in the structure of the dwelling, the services to be performed at it, and the access of the people to its courts, after such a manner as to keep up right impressions in their minds of the character of their divine Head, and of what became them as sojourners with Him in the land that was to be emphatically His own. In such a case, it was indispensable that all should be done under the express directions of God's hand; for it was as truly a revelation of His will to the members of the covenant as the direct utterances of His mouth: it must be made and ordered throughout according to the view of Moses; while the people, on their part, were to show their disposition to fall in with the design by contributing the requisite materials"—Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874).

As the most helpful, Fairbairn went on to show the relation of the ceremonial law to the moral, or of the use of the tabernacle in connection with the prior revelation of law in its strictest sense, which appears clearly in Exodus 25. After mentioning the different kinds of materials to be provided, instructions were given for the making of *the ark of the covenant*—it taking precedence over all the holy vessels. It was to be the depository of the Decalogue, being a coffer in which were placed the two tables of the Law. Upon it Jehovah took His seat or Throne, there manifesting His presence and glory in Israel's midst (Exo 25:21-22). It was therefore the most important and the most sacred piece of furniture in the house of the LORD. It was the centre from which all relating to Israel's fellowship with God was to proceed, and from which it derived its essential character. Those who, in a practical way, refused subjection to the duties which the Decalogue enjoined, at the same time repudiated Jehovah's kingship, and cut themselves off from all communion with Him—His law being the foundation of His Throne. Those who rendered submission to that Law could own no other throne, no other God.

The institutions and services of the tabernacle supplied further proof not only of the intimate relation which existed between the Decalogue and the Levitical code, but also of the dependence of the latter upon the former, being a consequence of the Sinaitic covenant. It was on the basis thereof that Jehovah took up His abode in Israel's midst, and the central design of the ceremonial law was to make known what was necessary in order for Israel's intercourse with Him. Since sin indwelt them, and was constantly producing its defiling effects and works, they could not have immediate access to or direct fellowship with the Holy One; and therefore, what took place at Sinai must be ever repeating itself. First, in order to meet with Jehovah, Israel must sanctify themselves (Exo 19:10-11)—provision for which was made in the ceremonial of purifications. Second, when ceremonially clean, they could not approach unto God in any manner *they* pleased, but only as He ordered (Exo 19:17)—inculcated in the limitation unto "the outer court." Third, approach unto Him, whose very glory is "like [a] devouring [consuming] fire" (Exo 24:17), could only be through those representatives selected by Himself (Exo 19:24)—hence, the appointment of the priesthood.

The great truth borne witness to by the Levitical rites was that only the clean and righteous could have fellowship with the LORD and enjoy His blessing; all others being excluded therefrom. But if that code be



examined in order to find out *who* pertained to that class, disappointing will be the result, for it treats only of the natural and external, and tells us not what is good or evil essentially and spiritually. Nor should we be surprised at this: rather should it be expected, since the ceremonial law was only of secondary importance. Israel must look to the character of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments if they would ascertain the vital distinctions of right and wrong, and learn their moral duty. The divers washings and ever-recurring atonements by the blood of the Levitical code testified to existing impurities, which were such because they were at variance with the law of righteousness promulgated in the Decalogue. It was *there* God had made known what was holy and unholy in His sight, and the ceremonial institutions presupposed that standard and ever called Israel's attention thereto by its numerous prescriptions of defilement and purification, and emphasized the solemn fact that corruptions still cleaved to them and that they fell far short of God's holy demands.

"The law of fleshly ordinances was a great teaching institution—not by itself, but when taken (according to its true intent) as an auxiliary of the Law of the two tables. Isolated from *those*, and placed in an independent position, as having an end of its own to reach, its teaching would have been at variance with the truth of things; for it would have led men to make account of mere outward distinctions, and rest in corporeal observances. In such a case, it would have been the antithesis rather than the complement of the Law from Sinai, which gave to the *moral* element the supreme place, alike in God's character and the homage and obedience He requires from His people. But, kept in its proper relation to that Law, the Levitical code was for the members of the old covenant an important means of instruction. It plied them with warnings and admonitions respecting sin as being defilement in the sight of God, and thereby excluding from His fellowship. That such, however, was the real design of this class of Levitical ordinances—that they had such a subsidiary aim, and derived all their importance and value from the connection in which they stood with the moral precepts of the Decalogue—is evident"—P. Fairbairn.

The relative importance of the Decalogue and the ceremonial law comes out plainly in such passages as these: "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" (1Sa 15:22). "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (Pro 21:3). "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But *this* thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Jer 7:22-23). "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?"—No, rather, "he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic 6:6-8).

Further proof of the subordination of the ceremonial law to the moral is seen in the fact that whenever the LORD denounced special judgments upon the covenant people, it was never for their neglect of the ceremonial observances, but always for palpable breaches of the precepts of the Decalogue. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Why so?—Because "they have chosen their *own* ways...because when I called, none did answer" (Isa 66:3-4). "Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it...your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me" (Jer 6:19-20). "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD" (Amo 2:4). Because Israel's magistrates were unjust in the discharge of their duties, Jehovah declared, "I hate, I despise your feast days...Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them" (Amo 5:12, 21-22).

There was a threefold failure of Israel in connection with the Law: First—and worst of all—those who were disloyal to Jehovah, forsaking Him and paying homage to the false gods of the Gentiles. *That* was a violation of the most fundamental part of the Decalogue and a horrible repudiation of the covenant relationship. The devout and pure worship of Jehovah lay at the very foundation of Judaism, and any flagrant departure from it was a sin which He ever visited with sore judgment. A man who truly loves his wife will bear with her infirmities, but infidelity he will not tolerate. So with Jehovah: He was longsuffering unto many things in Israel, but when their hearts lusted after the idols of the heathen, His wrath waxed hot

against them. The idolatry of the surrounding nations possessed an attraction for their corrupt hearts, being less exacting and more sensuous. It pandered to the proclivities of fallen human nature and gratified its depraved inclinations. What the worship of Jehovah repressed and condemned, that of heathendom fostered and indulged. Much of the earlier history of Israel consisted of such apostatizings from the LORD.

Second, an exalting of the ceremonial law above the moral. This was far more insidious than open idolatry, yet none the less fatal in its outcome; for while there were those who abandoned the vanities of the heathen and kept solely to the worship of God, yet He had not their hearts, and their ways were a reproach unto Him. Though they were strict and zealous in worshipping the true God, their minds were occupied only with outward forms and ceremonies, and those they esteemed far more highly than the precepts of the Law—and thereby the grand purpose of the covenant was despised by them. When we are not surrendered to God's authority and our lives are not ordered by His statutes, our attachment to external ordinances is only a species of "will worship," and means are given the place of those ends they are intended to promote. This grievous failure became characteristic of the great bulk of the nation in its later generations, so that while they were very punctilious in the ceremonial washing of pots and pans, and the tithing of mint, anise, and cumin, yet they "have omitted the weightier matters of the law": that is, "judgment [righteousness], mercy, and faith" (Mat 23:23)—whom our Lord denounced as hypocrites.

The writings of Israel's prophets contain many passages in which the LORD took the people to task for their lamentable failure to put first things first, and because they supposed they had discharged their full duty by observing the ceremonial ordinances, and presenting the appointed offerings. Isaiah was particularly severe in reproof and denouncing such a state of affairs in his day. While oppressing the widows and fatherless, they nevertheless frequented the courts of the temple and heaped sacrifices upon the altar, but the servant of the LORD told them that their oblations were "vain"—or, literally, "lying sacrifices." Though their hands were stained with blood, yet they spread them forth unto the LORD—but He would not hear their prayers (Isa 1:10-17). Though they sought God daily and took "delight in approaching [him]"—yea, "fasted" and "afflicted" their souls—God bade Isaiah, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression" (Isa 58:1-7). Unto those who entered the sacred courts to worship Jehovah, Jeremiah cried, "Amend your ways" (Jer 7:3). Ezekiel, too, sternly condemned the hypocrisy which so widely obtained in his generation (Eze 33:30-33).

At a later date, a third evil became prevalent among the covenant people. When the fires of divine judgment had at last purged out from among them the more heinous and abominable forms of transgression, Israel abandoned their previous idolatries and, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, rigidly maintained the worship of the one true and living God. But soon they went to another extreme: instead of using the Decalogue for the grand purpose for which it was designed, they perverted it into the means of life and salvation. From dislike for the Law, they now exalted it into a place it was never intended to occupy—a place completely at variance with both the revealed character of God and their own sinful condition. Though corrupt in nature, depraved in their conduct, unregenerate, and unholy, yet they trusted in their own endeavours to keep the Law for their acceptance with God—making their good works the ground of their justification before Him. It was among such a people that the Saviour was born, and by whom He was despised and rejected. It was against this flagrant and fatal error that His apostles had chiefly to contend.

Such a fundamental error consisted in isolating the covenant of *Law* at Sinai from the prior covenant of *promise* with Abraham, and in elevating the ceremonial law to the same level as the moral. This necessarily involved a *lowering* of the strictness and spirituality of the Decalogue, a closing of their eyes to both its depth and breadth, a substituting of external compliance with its precepts in the stead of that heart conformity which it required. We say "necessarily," for it is only when men lose sight of the fact that the holy standard demands nothing less than perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed, that they can entertain any hope of winning the favour of its Author by their vain attempts to measure up to it. The consequence of giving place to this error was the production of a spirit of bondage, for such an obedience could be only a servile one—instead of being prompted by love and gratitude. And the inevitable outcome of the same was that those who succumbed thereto were utterly deceived as to their real condition before God, and ignorant of their dire need of a Saviour. Fancying that they had already attained to righteousness, they perceived not the necessity of looking for righteousness unto Another.

Space will not allow us to elaborate, nor should that be necessary, for it ought to be quite apparent to any discerning eye that those three principal failures of Israel under Judaism are, alas, exactly duplicated in the outstanding anomalies which characterize a corrupt Christendom today. In some quarters, there has

been a grievous disloyalty both to God and His Christ, by a setting up of imaginary gods and unscriptural “saviours.” In others, there has been a woeful displacement of the spiritual and practical by an undue prominence and fictitious value being accorded to rites and ceremonies. There has also been a fatal rejection of the Gospel and a supplanting of it by a perversion of the moral law, so that human merits are substituted for divine grace, and salvation by works is openly taught rather than justification by faith.

## WELCOME TIDINGS

"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come" (Psa 65:2). Those words are not an expression of desire—"O that thou *wouldest* hear prayer"—but a thankful acknowledgment that God *does so*. It is a testimony unto His goodness that is freely made by all His people. They know from personal experience that prayer-answering is to be as truly ascribed unto the One with whom they have to do as are mercy, wisdom, faithfulness, and power. "Thou that hearest prayer" is one of the lesser-known titles of Deity, but surely, it is one of the most blessed! The previous verse (rarely understood) is interesting and significant: "Praise *waiteth* for thee, O God, in Sion" (Psa 65:1). That was a prophecy, and in verse 2, the Psalmist declared his confident faith in its fulfillment: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee *shall* all flesh come." Observe that verse 1 speaks of "God, in Sion" (compare Heb 12:22)—God in Christ, on the mercy-seat. "Unto thee shall *all flesh* [compare Act 2:16-17] come," which explains the "waiteth" of the previous verse: when the *Gentiles* shall be called, Zion shall indeed ring with praise.

"Thou that hearest prayer." The Majesty of heaven deigns to grant an audience unto worms of the earth! The ear of the Almighty is open to the cries of His creatures! But *who* are the ones He hears? Those whom the world regards as the great ones of the earth? Only those of high spiritual attainments? What saith the Scriptures? Let the following passages from the Psalms give answer: "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the *humble*" (Psa 10:17). "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the *afflicted*...when he cried unto him, he heard" (Psa 22:24). "This *poor* man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa 34:6). "For he shall deliver *the needy* when he crieth" (Psa 72:12). "He will regard the prayer of *the destitute*" (Psa 102:17). "They fell down, and there was *none to help*. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses" (Psa 107:12b-13). "They draw near unto the gates of death...and are at their *wit's end*. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses" (Psa 107:18, 27-28). "He will fulfil the desire of them that *fear* him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psa 145:19).

Those who are accustomed to remember this written ministry at the Throne of Grace will see from the following testimonies that God *does* answer prayer; and we trust they will greatly encourage our fellow helpers to engage yet more definitely and earnestly in interceding for God's blessing on this magazine, especially that *many more* hungry souls will be reached by it.

"I have read your Studies for twenty-four years, and enjoy the reading of them more than ever. I often stop to give thanks for such reading. May He sustain you for many years to come" (Australia). "The expository teaching contained in them is all too rare these days, as also its practical application" (Australia). "Once again, I express gratitude for your faithful ministry of the Word. May it be abundantly blest for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom" (New Zealand). "Studies are very much appreciated, as their depth and detail are in such contrast to many of the present-day publications. I must confess to having drawn largely on — in preparing an address to a young people's gathering" (New Zealand). "In this town (of over 17,000), there is no Gospel ministry. It is very wonderful to get a magazine like yours. I usually read them more than once" (New Zealand).

"I have received the beautiful magazine regularly. Thank you very much. I get many blessings. Praise the Lord. May God reward you abundantly" (Syria). "Your Studies are in truth a feast of fat things, especially to those who feel they cannot conscientiously join in with any church, and who worship God in their own home on the Lord's Day. It is almost impossible to tell which articles are the best: they have all been so helpful, especially the 'Prayers of the Apostles'" (Canada). "May I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks for the blessing and benefit that I have received from reading and studying your magazine" (Canadian pastor). "Many thanks for the Studies. I sure need them, as my 'fight' is a solitary one in a household of opposition. But there is One whose help is always available, and largely through the medium of the Studies" (Aged pilgrim in Canada). "Especially received much encouragement and real soul-searching while pondering your article, 'Identification of the Godly'" (Canada).

"They are excellent indeed, and I thank God for the talents He has so graciously bestowed on you. May He bless you and your good wife, and spare your lives for many more years of service unto Him" (Preacher in South Dakota). "We cherish your magazine so much. The food we get in our churches is mostly baby diet, and no strong meat" (California). "My copies of the Studies are so valuable to me that no amount of money could ever purchase them. As I have repeatedly stated, they have (under Him) been the greatest

blessing in my life" (Pastor in Texas). "Thank you again for your labours for us, who depend to a large extent upon the Studies for our food and satisfaction. There is little from our pulpits that meets our souls' needs" (Illinois). "Day after day, year after year (over twenty!), I say 'Thank you, Lord, for the Studies'" (Washington). "I read my own experience in your articles" (Florida). "I have enjoyed the Studies through another year: have been encouraged, strengthened, and blest by them" (North Carolina). "Your paper has once again brought untold blessing to my soul. I agree with many of your readers who state there are so very few periodicals that give the deeper truths of God's holy Word" (Pennsylvania). "Your ministry has meant so much to me, and I trust our God shall keep speaking to us through you" (Preacher in U.S.A.). "I have carefully read your article on 'Evangelism' and rejoice in your clear statement of the privilege and responsibility of evangelistic ministry. By the grace of God, I shall endeavour to honour Him, realizing the truth that it is of more importance that God should be glorified than that sinners should be saved" (Evangelist in Kentucky).

"When the Studies arrive, I cannot read them quick enough, for to me they are a real feast. I cannot express to you the inward feeling I had when reading your article on the revelation of God in the soul in the November issue" (Ireland). "I thank you as the servant of the Lord for instruction and much blessing" (Penrith). "I have received much instruction, correction, rebuke" (Lancs). "I cannot tell you how much pleasure and profit I obtain from the Studies. It is a great blessing that, at such a time as this, you should have been raised up and equipped for their fearless and faithful testimony" (English preacher). "I would thankfully testify to the help received again and again in turning over the pages of past volumes" (English preacher). "Have been much helped by your Studies and always look forward to receiving them" (London pastor). "You strike the right note when you constantly emphasize practical holiness and separation from the world" (Blackburn). "What rich food our heavenly Father provides for us through the Studies!" (Berks). "I do feel the perusal of them has been my main sustenance through the past year" (Manchester).

"I thank God for your work and labour of love, and for all the grace given you in your insight into the Scriptures. I feel like a thief sometimes, because I have reproduced so much of your material in my pulpit, but I believe it is your desire that the seed should be multiplied [Yes, indeed!]. Sorry we cannot meet and discuss things together, but for both of us, there are more important things to do than *talk*" (Pastor). "At different times during the past year when I have had a problem, your Studies came just at the right moment" (Edinburgh). "I value and appreciate them more with the passing years" (Dalry). "I am looking forward so much to your ministry" (Glasgow pastor). "The spiritual help received as the result of my reading and re-reading your articles, no words of mine could convey" (Wales).—"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev 19:6)!

