

Articles and Sermons :: bible study ,,,,a move of god

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The danger of not acknowledging and encouraging, and especially of deriding, this work.

I have thus long insisted on this point, because, if these things are so, it greatly manifest how much it behooves us to encourage and promote this work, and how dangerous it will be to forbear so doing. It is very dangerous for help of the Lord, whenever he remarkably pours out his Spirit, to carry on the work of redemption in the application of it; but above all, when he comes forth, to introduce that happy day of God's power and salvation, so often spoken of. That is especially the appointed season of the application of redemption, the appointed time of Christ's reign. The reign of Satan as god of this world lasts till then; but afterwards will be the proper time of actual redemption, or new creation, as is evident by Isa. lxv. 17, 18, &c. and Isa. lxvi. 12. and Rev. xxi. 1. All the outpourings of the Spirit of God before this are as it were by way of anticipation. There was indeed a glorious season of the application of redemption in the first ages of the Christian church, which began at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost; but that was not the proper time of ingathering. It was only as it were the feast of first-fruits; the ingathering is at the end of the year, or in the last ages of the Christian church, as is represented, Rev. xiv. 14-16. And will probably as much exceed what was in the first ages of the Christian church, though that filled the Roman empire, as that exceeded all that had been before, under the Old Testament, confined only to the land of Judea.

The great danger of not appearing openly to acknowledge, rejoice in, and promote that great work of God, in bringing in that glorious harvest, is represented in "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left, of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." It is evident by all the context that the glorious day of the church of God in the latter ages of the world is the time spoken of. The feast of tabernacles here seems to signify that glorious spiritual feast which God shall then make for his church, the same that is spoken of, Isa. xxv. 6. And the great spiritual rejoicings of God's people at that time. There were three great feasts in Israel at that time. There were three great feasts in Israel at which all the males were appointed to go up to Jerusalem; the feast of the Passover; and the feast of the first-fruits, or the feast of Pentecost; and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, or the feast of tabernacles. In the first of these viz. The feast of the Passover, was represented the purchase of redemption by Jesus Christ; for the paschal lamb was slain at the time of that feast. The other two that followed it were to represent the two great seasons of the application of the purchased redemption. In the former of them, viz. The feast of the first-fruits, which was called the feast of Pentecost, was represented that time of the outpouring of the Spirit in the first ages of the Christian church, for the bringing in the first-fruits of Christ's redemption, which began at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The other, which was the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year—which the children of Israel were appointed to keep on occasion of their gathering in their corn and their wine, and all the fruit of their land, and was called the feast of tabernacles—represented the other more joyful and glorious season of the application of Christ's redemption, which is to be in the latter days. Then will be the great day of ingathering of the elect, the proper and appointed time of gathering in God's fruits, when the angel of the covenant shall thrust in his sickle, and gather the harvest of the earth; and the clusters of the vine of the earth shall also be gathered. This was upon many accounts the greatest feast of the three. There were much greater tokens of rejoicings in this feast than any other. The people dwelt in booths of green boughs, and were commanded to take boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and to rejoice before the Lord their God. This represents the flourishing, beautiful, pleasant state of the church, rejoicing in God's grace and love, and triumphing over all her enemies. The tabernacle of God was first set up among the children of Israel, at the time of the feast of tabernacles; but, in that glorious time of the Christian church, God will above all other times set up his tabernacle amongst men, Rev. xxi. 3. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying: The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

The world is supposed to have been created about the time of year wherein the feast of tabernacles was appointed; so, in that glorious time God will create a new heaven and a new earth. The temple of Solomon was dedicated at the time of

the feast of tabernacles, when God descended in a pillar of cloud, and dwelt in the temple; so, at this happy time, the temple of God shall be gloriously built up in the world, and God shall in a wonderful manner come down from heaven to dwell with his church. Christ is supposed to have been born at the feast of tabernacles; so, at the commencement of that glorious day, Christ shall be born; then, above all other times, shall “the woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet, that is in travail, and pained to be delivered, bring forth her son, to rule all nations,” Rev. xii. The feast of tabernacles was the last feast that Israel had in the whole year, before the face of the earth was destroyed by the winter; presently after the rejoicings of that feast were past, a tempestuous season began, Acts xxvii. 9. “Sailing was now dangerous, because the feast was now already past.” So this great feast of the Christian church will be the last feast she shall have on earth; soon after it is past, this lower world will be destroyed. At the feast of tabernacles, Israel left their houses to dwell in booths or green tents; which signifies the great weanedness of God’s people from the world, as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and their great joy therein. Israel were prepared for the feast of tabernacles by the feast of trumpets, and the day of atonement, both in the same month; so, 384 years shall be made for the joy of the church of God, in its glorious state on earth, by the extraordinary preaching of the gospel, deep repentance and humiliation for past sins, and for the great and long-continued deadness and carnality of the visible church. Christ, at the great feast of tabernacles, stood in Jerusalem, and John vii. 37, 38. “cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters:” signifying the extraordinary freedom and riches of divine grace towards sinners at that day, and the extraordinary freedom and riches of divine grace towards sinners at that day, and the extraordinary measures of the Holy Spirit that shall be then given; agreeable to Rev. xxi. 6. And xxii. 17.

It is threatened (Zech. xiv.) that those who at that time shall not come to keep this feast, i.e. that shall not acknowledge God’s glorious works, praise his name, and rejoice with his people—but who should stand at a distance, as unbelieving and disaffected—upon them shall be no rain; they shall then descend on earth, the spiritual rain spoken of, Isa. xlv. 3. But God would give them over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. The curse is denounced against such, in a manner still more awful, ver. xlv. 12. “And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.” Here also, in all probability, is intended a spiritual judgment, or a plague and curse from God upon the soul, rather than upon the body; that such persons, who at that time shall oppose God’s people in his work, shall in an extraordinary manner be given over to a state of spiritual death and ruin, that they shall remarkably appear dead while alive, and shall be as walking rotten corpses while they go about amongst men. The great danger of not joining with God’s people at that glorious day is also represented, Isa. lx. 12. “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Most of the great temporal deliverances wrought for Israel of old, were typical of the great spiritual works of God for the salvation of souls, and the deliverance and prosperity of his church, in gospel days; and especially they represented that greatest of all deliverances of God’s church in the latter days; which is above all others the proper season of actual redemption of men’s souls. But it may be observed, that if any appeared to oppose God’s work in those great temporal deliverances; or if there were any of his professing people, who on such occasions lay still, stood at a distance, or did not arise and acknowledge God in his work, and appear to promote it; it was what in a remarkable manner incensed God’s anger, and brought his curse upon such persons.—When God wrought that great work of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, (which was a type of God’s delivering his church out of the spiritual Egypt at the time of the fall of Antichrist, as is evident by Rev. xi. 8. And xv. 3.) how highly did he resent it, when the Amalekites appeared as opposers in that affair! And how dreadfully did he curse them for it! Exod. xvii. 14, 15, 16. And accordingly we find that God remembered it a long time after, 1 Sam. xv. 3. And how highly did God resent it in the Moabites and Ammonites, that they did not lend a helping hand, and encourage and promote the affair! Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever; because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt.” And how were the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh threatened, if they did not go and help their brethren in their wars against the Canaanites! Num. xxxii. 20-23. “And Moses said unto them, if ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over the Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord; then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.”

That was a glorious work which God wrought for Israel, when he delivered them from the Canaanites, by the hand of Deborah and Barak. Almost every thing about it showed a remarkable hand of God. It was a prophetic, one immediately inspired by God, that called the people to the battle, and conducted them in the whole affair. The people seem to have been miraculously animated and encouraged in the matter, when they willingly offered themselves, and gathered together to

o the battle; they jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field, without being pressed or hired, when one would have thought they should have but little courage for such an undertaking. For what could a number of poor, weak, defenceless slaves do, without a shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand of them, to go against a great prince, with his mighty host, and nine hundred chariots of iron? And the success wonderfully showed the hand of God; which makes Deborah exultingly to say, Judg. v. 3. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" Christ with his heavenly host was engaged in that battle; and therefore it is said, ver. 20. "They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." The work of God therefore, in this victory and deliverance which Christ and his host wrought for Israel, was a type of what he will accomplish for his church in that great last conflict of the church with her open enemies, that shall introduce the church's latter-day glory; as appears by Rev. xvi. 16. (speaking of the great battle,) "And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon," i.e. the mountain of Megiddo; alluding, as is supposed by expositors, to the place where the battle was fought with the host of Sisera, Judg. v. 19. "The kings came and fought, the kings of Canaan, in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo." Which can signify nothing else than that this battle, which Christ and his church shall have with their enemies, is the antitype of the battle that was fought there. But what a dreadful curse from Christ did some of God's professing people Israel bring upon themselves, by lying still at that time, and not putting to a helping hand! Judg. v. 23. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." The angel of the Lord was the captain of the host; he that had led Israel, and fought for them in that battle, who is very often called the angel of the Lord, in Scripture; the same that appeared to Joshua with a sword drawn in his hand, and told him that he was come as the captain of the host of the Lord: and the same glorious captain who is represented as leading forth his hosts to that battle, of which this was the type, Rev. xix. 11, &c. It seems the inhabitants of Meroz were unbelieving concerning this great work; they would not hearken to Deborah's pretences, nor did it enter into them that such a poor defenceless company should ever prevail against those that were so mighty. They did not acknowledge the hand of God, and therefore stood at a distance, and did nothing to promote the work; but what a bitter curse from God did they bring upon themselves by it!—It is very probable that one great reason why the inhabitants of Meroz were so unbelieving concerning this work, was, that they argued a priori; they did not like the beginning of it, it being a woman that first led the way, and had the chief conduct in the affair; or could they believe that such despicable instruments, as a company of unarmed slaves, were ever like to effect so great a thing; and pride and unbelief wrought together, in not being willing to follow Deborah to the battle.

It was another glorious work of God that he wrought for Israel, in the victory that was obtained by Gideon over the Midianites and Amalekites, and the children of the east, when they came up against Israel like grasshoppers, a 385 multitude that could not be numbered. This also was a remarkable type of the victory of Christ and his church over his enemies, by the pouring out of the Spirit with the preached gospel; as is evident by the manner in which Gideon was immediately directed of God, which was not by human sword or bow, but by blowing of trumpets, and by lights in earthen vessels. We read that, on this occasion, Gideon called the people together to help in this great affair; and that accordingly great numbers resorted to him, and came to the help of the lord, Judg. vii. 23, 24. But the inhabitants of Succoth and Peniel were unbelieving, and would not acknowledge the hand of God in that work, though it was so great and wonderful, nor would they join to promote it. Gideon desired their help, when he was pursuing after Zeba and Zalmunna; but they despised his pretences, and his confidence of the Lord being on his side, to deliver those two great princes into the hands of such a despicable company as he and his three hundred men, and would not own the work of God, nor afford Gideon any assistance. God proceeded in this work in a way that was exceeding cross to their pride. And they also refused to own the work, because they argued a priori; they could not believe that God would do such great things by such a despicable instrument, one of such a poor, mean family in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house; and the company that was with him appeared very wretched, being but three hundred men, and they weak and faint. But we see how they suffered for their folly, in not acknowledging and appearing to promote this work of God: Gideon, when he returned from the victory, took them, and taught them with the briers and thorns of the wilderness, and beat down the tower of Peniel, (he brought down their pride and their false confidence,) and slew the men of the city, Judg. viii. This in all probability Gideon did, as moved and directed by the angel of the Lord, that is Christ, who first called him, and sent him forth in this battle, and instructed and directed him in the whole affair.

The return of the ark of God to dwell in Zion, in the midst of the land of Israel, after it had been long absent—first in the land of the Philistines, and then in Kiriath-jearim, in the utmost borders of the land—strikingly represented the return of God to a professing people, in the spiritual tokens of his presence, after long absence from them. The ark ascending up into a mountain typified Christ's ascension into heaven. It is evident by the psalms that were penned on that occasion, especially the 68th Psalm, that the exceeding rejoicings of Israel on that occasion represented the joy of the church of Christ on his returning to it, after it has been in a low and dark state, to revive his work, bringing his people back, as it were, from Bashan, and from the depth of the sea; scattering their spiritual enemies, and causing that though they had lain among the pots, yet they should be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; and give

ving the blessed tokens of his presence in his house, that his people may see the goings of God their King in the sanctuary. The gifts of which David, with such royal bounty, distributed amongst the people on that occasion, (2 Sam. vi. 18, 19 . and 1 Chron. xvi. 2, 3.) represent spiritual blessings that Christ liberally sends down on his church, by the outpourings of the Spirit. See Ps. lxxviii. 1, 3, 13, 18-24. And we have an account how that all the people, from Shihor of Egypt, even unto the entering in of Hemath, gathered together, and appeared to join and assist in that great affair; and that all Israel 1 Chron. xv. 28. "brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord, with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps," 1 Chron. xiii. 2, 5. and 1 Chron. xv. 28. And not only the men, but the women of Israel, the daughters of Zion appeared, as publicly joining in the praises and rejoicings on that occasion, 2 Sam. vi. 19. But we read of one of David's wives, even Michal, Saul's daughter, whose heart was not engaged in the affair, and did not appear with others to rejoice and praise God on this occasion, but kept away, and stood at a distance, as disaffected, and disliking the management. She despised and ridiculed the transports and extraordinary manifestations of joy; and the curse that she brought upon herself by it was that of being barren to the day of her death. Let this be a warning to us: let us take heed, in this day of the bringing up of the ark of God, that, while we are in visibility and profession the spouse of the spiritual David, we do not show ourselves to be indeed the children of false-hearted and rebellious Saul, by our standing aloof, and our not joining in the joy and praises of the day, disliking and despising the joys and affections of God's people because they are so high in degree, and so bring the curse of perpetual barrenness upon our souls.

Let us take heed that we be not like the son of the bond-woman, born after the flesh, that persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, and mocked at the feasting and rejoicings that were made for Isaac when he was weaned; let us should be cast out of the family of Abraham, as he was, Gen. xxi. 8, 9. That affair contained spiritual mysteries, and was typical of things that come to pass in these days of the gospel; as is evident by the apostle's testimony, Gal. iv. 22, &c. And particularly it seems to have been typical of two things;

First, The weaning of the church from its milk of carnal ordinances, ceremonies, shadows, and beggarly elements upon the coming of Christ, and pouring out of the Spirit in the days of the apostles. The church of Christ, in the times of the Old Testament, was in its minority, even as a babe: and the apostle tells us that babes must be fed with milk, and not with strong meat: but when God weaned his church from these carnal ordinances, on the ceasing of the legal dispensation, a glorious gospel-feast was provided for souls, and God fed his people with spiritual dainties, filled them with the Spirit, and gave them joy in the Holy Ghost. Ishmael in mocking at the time of Isaac's feast, by the apostle's testimony, represented the carnal Jews, the children of the literal Jerusalem, who, when they beheld the rejoicings of Christians in their spiritual and evangelical privileges, were filled with envy, deriding, contradicting, and blaspheming, (Acts ii. 13. and chap. xiii. 45. and xviii. 6.) and therefore were cast out of the family of Abraham, and out of the land of Canaan, to wander through the earth.

Secondly, This weaning of Isaac seems also to represent the conversion of sinners, which is several times represented in Scripture by the weaning of a child; as in Ps. cxxxi. and Isa. xxviii. 9. Because in conversion the soul is weaned from the enjoyments of the world, which are as it were the breast of our mother earth; and is also weaned from the covenant of our first parents, which we as naturally hang upon, as a child on its mother's breast. And the great feast that Abraham made on that occasion represents the spiritual feast, the heavenly privileges, and holy joys and comforts, which God gives to souls at their conversion. Now is a time when God in a remarkable manner is bestowing the blessings of such a feast: let every one take heed that he do not now show himself to be the son of the bond-woman, and born after the flesh, by standing and deriding, with mocking Ishmael; lest they be cast out as he was, and it be said concerning them, "The seed of the bond-woman shall not be heirs with the sons of the free-woman." Do not let us stumble at these things, because they are so great and extraordinary; for if we "have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses?" There is doubtless a time coming when God will accomplish things vastly greater and more extraordinary than these.

And that we may be warned not to continue doubting and unbelieving concerning this work, because of the extraordinary degree of it, and the suddenness and swiftness of the accomplishment of the great things that pertain to it; let us consider the example of the unbelieving lord in Samaria, who could not believe so extraordinary a work of God to be accomplished so suddenly as was declared to him. The prophet Elisha foretold that the great famine in Samaria should very suddenly, even in one day, be turned into an extraordinary plenty; but the work was too great and too sudden for him to believe; says he, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And the curse that he brought upon himself by it his eyes, and did not eat thereof, but miserably perished, and was trodden down as the mire of the streets, when others were feasting and rejoicing, 2 Kings vii. 38

When God redeemed his people from their Babylonish captivity, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, it was, as is universally own

ed, a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption of God's church; and particularly of the great deliverance of the Christian church from spiritual Babylon, and their rebuilding the spiritual Jerusalem, in the latter days; and therefore they are often spoken of as one by the prophets. And this probably was the main reason that it was so ordered in Providence, and particularly noted in Scripture, that the children of Israel, on that occasion, kept the greatest feast of tabernacles that ever had been kept in Israel since the days of Joshua, when the people were first settled in Canaan. (Neh. viii. 16, 17.) For at that time happened that restoration of Israel, which had the greatest resemblance of the great restoration of the church of God, of which the feast of tabernacles was the type, of any that had been since Joshua first brought the people out of the wilderness, and settled them in the good land. But we read of some that opposed the Jews in that affair, weakened their hands, ridiculed God's people, the instruments employed in that work, despised their hopes, and made as though their confidence was little more than a shadow, and would utterly fail them: "What do these feeble Jews? (say they,) will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Let not us be in any measure like them, lest it be said to us, as Nehemiah said to them, Neh. ii. 20. "We his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." And lest we bring Nehemiah's imprecations upon us, chap. iv. 5. "Cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders."

As persons will greatly expose themselves to the curse of God, by opposing, or standing at a distance, and keeping silence at such a time as this; so for persons to arise, and readily to acknowledge God, and honour him in such a work, and cheerfully and vigorously to exert themselves to promote it, will be to put themselves much in the way of the divine blessing. What a mark of honour does God put upon those in Israel, that willingly offered themselves, and came to the help of the Lord against the mighty, when the angel of the Lord led forth his armies, and they fought from heaven against Sisera! Judg. v. 2, 9, 14-18. And what a great blessing is pronounced on Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for her appearing on the Lord's side, and for what she did to promote that work! Judges v. 24. "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent." And what a blessing is pronounced on those which shall have any hand in the destruction of Babylon, which was the head city of the kingdom of Satan, and of the enemies of the church of God! Psal. cxxxvii. 9. "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stone." What a particular and honourable notice is taken, in the records of God's work, of those that arose and appeared as David's helpers, to introduce him into the kingdom of Israel! 1 Chron. xii. The host of those who thus came to the help of the Lord, in that glorious revolution in Israel, by which the kingdom of that great type of the Messiah was set up in Israel, is compared to the host of God, (ver. 22.) "At that time, day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God." And doubtless it was intended to be a type of the host that shall appear with the spiritual David, as his helpers, when he shall come to set up his kingdom in the world; the same host that we read of, Rev. xiv. 14. The Spirit of God then pronounced a special blessing on David's helpers, as co-workers with God, (ver. 18. "Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for they God helpeth thee." So we may conclude, that God will much more give his blessing to such as come to the help of the Lord, when he sets his own dear Son as a King on his holy hill of Zion. They shall be received by Christ, and he will put peculiar honour upon them, as David did on those his helpers; as we have an account in the following words, (ver. 18. "Then David received them, and made them

captains of the band." It is particularly noted of those that came to David to Hebron, ready armed to the war, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord, that "they were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," ver. 23, and 32. Wherein they differed from the Pharisees and other Jews, who did not come to the help of the Lord, at the time that the great Son of David appeared to set up his kingdom in the world. These Christ condemns, because they had not "understanding of those times," Luke xii. 56. "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern these times;" so it will always be, when Christ remarkably appears on earth, on a design of setting up his kingdom here; many will not understand the times, nor what Israel ought to do, and so will not come to turn about the kingdom to David.

The favourable notice that God will take of such as appear to promote the work of God, at such a time as this, may also be argued from such a very particular notice being taken in the sacred records, of those that helped in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, upon the return from the Babylonian captivity, Nehem. Chap. iii.

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