

**Articles and Sermons :: The Octave of Redemption****The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/13 17:34****Chapter 1 - The Incarnation**

As we take up these meditations, let me utter a brief word of caution. We are not just embarking upon some "line of truth" — a theme, a subject. The fact is that there is no "truth" apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, and the truth is in Him, not about Him. For the right apprehension, therefore, of the truth, a personal relationship with Himself in life is essential. We cannot know the Truth except by union with the Lord Jesus in a living way. That in turn demands the work of the Holy Spirit upon us and in us, and that means that we must be in a spiritual condition to understand and apprehend the truth, "even as truth is in Jesus", (Eph. 4:21). Our life — all of our life — our hope, our salvation, our way, our assurance — our everything — is centred in the Lord Jesus Himself. It is not centred in some aspect or interpretation of the truth: it is centred in Himself. Everything, therefore, is resolved into a matter of knowing Him, of "attaining unto the full knowledge of the Son of God", (Eph. 4:13); and the value of what the Lord may say to us in the ensuing pages will depend entirely upon our living relationship to Him, Who is the Truth: the Sum of truth, and the Power of the truth.

**Introductory**

We have called this series of studies "The Octave of Redemption". The word "octave" (from the Latin *octavus*) means "eighth", and in music it means the interval between the first and last of the eight primary notes which complete the musical scale, since every eighth note repeats the first at a higher (or lower) level. We might equally well have taken as our title "The Rainbow of Redemption", for we have a very similar thought there, with the seven primary colours, and then number eight returning to number one. In such "octaves", we see one series, or phase, or movement, completed, and a new one commenced; the series of seven is never regarded as finished in itself — it must have the next to make the scale complete. We know, if we try it on an instrument, how necessary the "eight" is — how incomplete seven is without eight.

This feature of "seven plus one" is peculiarly a mark of Christianity. Christianity is based upon the day after the Sabbath day, upon the eighth day which became the first day of the week. Judaism remains the religion of the seventh day: we know how incomplete it is, how it has stopped short and never gone on, never moved into taking the eighth day as the first. Christianity rests upon that eighth day which has become the first — the end of a phase of Divine work and the beginning of a new. The word "Sabbath", however, does not mean "seventh"; it means "rest". Seven sees a completeness; eight means that God begins again upon something that has been completed. His new beginning is out from something finished — God proceeds from completion. That is Christianity: it rests upon something finished, and that something finished is God's rest, God's satisfaction. He begins everything from that point.

As you may know, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are not only symbols for sounds, but also symbols for numerals; that is, each letter has a numerical value. And that is not only true of the Hebrew language. The name "Jesus", in the Greek form, as used in the New Testament, has six letters, each letter having a numerical value; and when all those letters are put together with their numerical value they add up to 888. "Jesus" = 888. I am not making a great deal of that, or trying to be fanciful, but I think it is impressive — I do not think that is an accident. He is the "eighth day" Man, the One Who has gone beyond, having perfected the work of redemption.

**Eight Aspects Of Redemption**

Now, redemption may be said to have eight primary notes or aspects. There are, of course, many subsidiary features, but there are eight primary ones. These are:

1. The Incarnation
2. The Earthly Life
3. The Cross and Resurrection
4. The Forty Days after the Resurrection
5. The Ascension and the Glorifying
6. The Advent of the Holy Spirit
7. The Birth, Vocation and Completion of the Church

## 8. The Coming Again.

Into these everything else is gathered, and there is nothing outside of them; they complete the scale. You will notice that one and eight are the two comings. In principle, eight returns full circle to one: it is the coming of the Lord, representing two completions. The first coming, the Incarnation, was the completion of a phase: "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ", (John 1:17); and it need not be emphasized that the coming again will be likewise the completion of a phase. But each is also the beginning of an entirely new phase. "The hour cometh, and now is...", said the Lord Jesus (John 4:23), introducing that new phase, and we may indeed thank God that it will be true when He comes again.

One other small technical point by the way. The Hebrew word for "seven" just means "satisfaction" or "completion". We scarcely need comment upon that. God saw all things: they were "very good" (Gen. 1:31); and God rested in His satisfaction, in the completion of His work. But the Hebrew word for "eight" is again a very interesting word. It takes its rise from the root "shammah", which occurs in one of the names of the Lord, "Jehovah-Shammah", (Ezek. 48:35), meaning "the Lord super-abundant", the all-sufficient One. So eight follows seven. Seven signifies completeness, and yet the Lord never stops there — He is super-abundant.

Now we shall approach each of these different aspects — these eight "notes" in the "scale" of redemption — with a question: the question "Why?", and we apply it first to the Incarnation: Why the Incarnation? Why was it necessary that the Son of God should take human form and human nature?

### Why The Incarnation?

Of course, to answer that fully we should be under the obligation to consider the whole of the Divine thought and conception in the creation of man at all. Man's conception in the mind of God, man's vocation and man's destiny — this all represents a very great thing in the thought of God. But we have to allow that to come in at this point in order to lead us further. We might say — and rightly — that the Bible is all about God. That is true. We might go on to say that the Bible is all about God's interest in His Son, and that is quite true. But when you have taken full account of both these facts, you find that you cannot divorce either of these matters from man. The Bible is all about God — yes, but it is about God and His relationship to man, and man's relationship to Him. It is all about God's Son — and yet it is all about the concern of God's Son for man. When you have said everything, you arrive at man. We should not be interested in a remote God outside of the realm of human life. The truth is that everything has to focus down upon man, and we find that the Bible is the book of God's interest in man. Somehow God's interests are inexplicably bound up with man — his vocation and his destiny. All this and what it implies will be gathered into what we are going to say about the Incarnation.

Why the Incarnation? The answer is threefold. Firstly, for the redemption, or reclamation, of man. Secondly, for the reconstruction or re-constitution of man. And thirdly, for the perfecting and glorifying of man.

### (1) For The Reclamation Of Man

Firstly, for the redemption or reclamation of man. The common idea about redemption is associated with the slave market — going into the slave market and buying out or buying back, redeeming, that which has been sold into it. There are, indeed, certain fragments of Scripture which lend themselves to that idea. "Sold under sin", (Rom. 7:14) is a scriptural phrase, but we need some clarification of it. You say redemption means the "buying out" of man from the slave market. He has been sold into some kind of slavery and bondage. True; but who sold him? Until you look into that question, and answer it, you have not really got to the meaning of redemption. Who sold him? He sold himself! That puts a new complexion upon things. We speak of a man "selling himself to the Devil". But how did he do it? Well, he did not sell himself objectively, like selling some chattel, some thing, some object, into another's possession. He sold himself subjectively — he sold himself in his soul. He actually sold his soul to the Devil.

But exactly what happened? Let us put it in this way. There was a day when someone knocked, and he opened the door: and that someone began to speak, and to speak treachery, under cover of beautiful language, and clothed in very appealing terms: and instead of slamming the door in the face of that visitor, he opened it a little wider and listened. Remember — that is always the first step to bondage, that is always the first movement towards a situation calling for redemption — listening to the Devil, and not immediately reacting with a question: Is this true of God, or is this false as to God? Is God a Person like that, or is He other than that? If every Christian would react like that to satanic suggestions and insinuations, what a different situation would obtain in many Christian lives! There are many in awful bondage

because they have listened, they have opened the door; they have never confronted themselves with this question: Do you really believe that God is a God like that? Let me urge you to take that question to your present problem—situations and conditions, accusations and condemnations that the enemy is always trying to throw at you, in order to bring you into bondage—and say: Is God really like that?

#### The Root Sin: Unbelief

When man opened the door of his soul and listened to the enemy, he opened himself to unbelief. And remember—unbelief is the root sin. Let us be quite clear about that. There may be motives behind, but the root sin is unbelief. It is the one thing that God will not have, the one thing that sets God back, holds Him off, makes Him non-committal. Whilst there is any unbelief, God stands back; so long as it persists, the gap grows. God will never commit Himself where there is unbelief. Does that sound elementary? It is a thing that pursues us right to the end. This question of faith in God is the basis of all our education. Let it be said straight away that the measure in which God has ever committed Himself or will ever commit Himself is the measure of our faith in Him. When man opened the door to unbelief, Satan put his foot inside, right into man's soul, and has never taken it out. He has maintained that foothold in man's soul ever since. So that now the soul of man, as he is by nature, is linked with the evil powers, and the strength of that link is unbelief. Until that unbelief can be completely broken, shattered, the union between natural man and Satan continues.

Redemption or reclamation begins with faith: that is what we should call the simple Gospel. Faith is the very beginning of redemption. But faith is also the basis of continual redemption, continual recovery or reclamation. Redemption, while in Christ it is completed and perfect, is something that is going on: we are "receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls", (1 Pet. 1:9). This matter is going on continually; it is progressive. While final in the work of Christ, it begins in us with the first exercise of faith—believing God—and proceeds upon that basis right to the end. How true it is that, when we fail to believe God, cease to believe God, have questions about God, we immediately come into some kind of bondage; Satan gets some hold, or has some gain. Immediately any doubt of the Lord comes in, we find ourselves at once locked up, and the only way out is a recovery of faith in God again.

Now, because of his unbelief, Adam brought about and established for the whole race a soul-link with the evil powers, and that is the nature of man's bondage. He is sold to another. That lays the foundation for the real, true meaning of redemption. Why the Incarnation? A final Adam to the fight and to the rescue came: another Man came to redeem man. But oh, we shall see as we go on that that was no mere objective activity—it was not just the things that He did. He was in His very being the Redeemer. Let me put that in another way: He was redemption. He not only did something, but He was that. This will become clearer later. But here we see the necessity for a Man of whom none of this is true coming to the rescue: a Man Who, because of His non-implication personally in the entail of Adam's sin, has a clear and unique advantage. The Incarnation was to provide redemption for man in a Man, and not only for man by a Man. I hope you see the significance of that. It is a tremendous thing to see not only what Jesus did, but what He was to meet the situation.

#### (2) For The Re-Constitution Of Man

By Adam's act, as we have seen, man became disordered in his very constitution, deranged, broken, another kind of being from what God had made him and intended him to be. He was robbed, and therefore deficient; deceived, and therefore defrauded. He lost what he had—his innocence. He lost what God meant him to have, and had already provided for him, on the basis of faith in Himself. He became a culpable being. Reading back with our Bible in our hand and the full revelation of Scripture, we are now able to see what man was intended to have. It all becomes clear now. He was intended for two things.

Firstly, he was intended to have the Spirit of God indwelling him. He was intended to be a temple of God. The whole Scripture now makes it perfectly clear that it was God's original intention that He should dwell in man, that the Spirit of God should be resident within. Secondly, it was intended that he should have within him what is now called in the New Testament "eternal life"—the life of the ages, Divine life, uncreated life. But he missed the intention of God in both respects. The Incarnation was for the express purpose of begetting a "new-creation" man in which those two things could become actualities: man now indwelt by the Spirit of God; man possessing eternal life. That is the answer to the question: Why the Incarnation? And let me repeat that the Lord Jesus not only effected that as some accomplishment, or transaction, or work done: He was Himself the first of that order, to beget another race after that kind.

#### (3) For The Perfecting And Glorifying Of Man

And finally, the perfecting and the glorifying of man. Of course, these two things are clearly seen in Jesus, the Son of Man. Some of the more serious things of the Word of God are said in this connection. "Though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered." (Heb. 5:8). He was made "perfect through sufferings", (Heb. 2:10). We will not stop with the theology or the doctrine of that. We can focus it down to the one word which we have used and underlined already. How was He perfected, or completed?

I think, in faith. He had, as Man, accepted voluntarily a basis of faith — to live His life on the principle of faith in God, His Father. And it was concerning that that every trial and testing and ordeal had its meaning — if by any means the enemy could entrap the last Adam, as he had the first. He had succeeded with the first race on one point only, and that point was unbelief. So successful a manoeuvre could lead him to believe that there was no better. "That is the thing that does it — that is the point upon which to focus", we can almost hear him say. It opens up the life of the Lord Jesus very much more fully and clearly to recognize that the focal point of all His trials, testings, satanic assaults, every imaginable thing that was working contrary to Him — and we have not got the whole story, by any means — had as its one object the insinuation of some question about His Father. The enemy knew that the devastation of a new creation could be brought about on that one thing. And he knows it today, with you and with me. Then, the Son of Man was made perfect through sufferings. In what way? what were His sufferings? I do not mean His physical sufferings. His physical sufferings were but the ways and means by which the enemy was trying to get at His soul. The real suffering that the Son of God, the Son of Man, knew, was this constant, nagging pressure and assault from every angle, the unceasing efforts of the enemy to get in between Himself and His Father. That was the essence of His supreme agony when He cried: "Thou hast forsaken Me!" I do not believe, and I am sure you do not believe, that His cry in the garden — "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" — was the cry of a Man Who was not prepared to die even the kind of death that He was facing. That kind of thing has, of course, given rise to an utterly false doctrine and theology. Jesus knew what He had to face in being made sin: He knew that the ultimate, dire issue lay in that moment when the Father's face would be turned away, and He would be left, like the scape-goat out in the wilderness, alone, alone, alone — God-forsaken in that one awful moment. That was the point of His suffering, and that was the sum of His suffering.

But through it all, through all the sufferings, He was made perfect — perfect in faith. What meaning that gives to such words as these, so familiar to us, and used so lightly: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20, A.V.). What a faith to live by! If only that faith could be transmitted to us — if only that faith could be in us in the power of the Holy Spirit! Then we should get through all right. "I live by the faith of the Son of God" — tested, tried, assailed to the last degree, and triumphant. I am glad that the end of the story was not on the note of God-forsakenness, but on the note of triumph: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It is all over — it is victory! That is faith perfected through suffering, and made complete by obedience — for obedience is always faith's proof. There is no such thing as faith without obedience.

#### Why The Transfiguration?

At this point we might put in an extra question: Why the transfiguration? The transfiguration represented the end of His own course, the end of His own road. He had travelled the road of testing and trying, the road of utterness of consecration to His Father. So far as He personally was concerned, He had no further to go. He had been obedient — that was the end of the road for Him. Hence glory could come in then. For Him there is glory — the transfiguration: a Man Who has gone all the way with God in faith's obedience has been glorified. But as for the rest, that is for us — that is our part in it. He came out of that glory, and, "instead of that joy set before Him, He endured the Cross", (Heb. 12:2). He took our place, in order to bring us to His place — to glory — "many sons to glory", (Heb. 2:10), and He was thereby made "perfect through sufferings." A Man glorified, through faith, for man — nothing apart from us.

His glorification, as we shall see later, is a part of the redemption. It is a part of the re-constitution, it is the issue of all; and therefore, since the redemption and the re-constitution are for us in Christ, the glorifying is for us in Him also. "Glorified together with Him", (Rom. 8:17). He was able to say at the last: "Father, I have glorified Thee upon the earth"; and therefore He could also say: "Father, glorify Thou Me... with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." (John 17:4-5). The point is that here on this earth the Lord Jesus lived a life of faith, and was as utterly dependent upon God for everything as you or I are. His was as utterly a life of faith as ever you and I are called upon to live. And on that basis, as Man, He went through in such complete satisfaction to God that He could be glorified. But remember, the Incarnation was not for Himself: it was for us, and all that was bound up with the Incarnation is for us. It is our redemption, our re-constitution and our glorification through perfecting in Him.

#### What Christ Is For Us

Now, all this lays the foundation for believing Â— it is a pity we have not got the exact translation Â— "believing on to, or into, the Lord Jesus". Just to say: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", is weak; it leaves much to be desired. This is positional: it indicates a change of position, a movement: "Believe on to the Lord Jesus Christ". It really means this: that there is in true faith something that makes Him, so to speak, into ourselves, and ourselves into Him. Do not misunderstand me: I am not talking about Deity Â— I am talking about the Son of Man. There is something of deep spiritual significance in that word at the Lord's Table: "My body, Which is for you". Leaving out the extreme and wrong ideas associated with transubstantiation, and all that, behind it there is something left for the dispensation to recognize, until He comes again. Behind it there is this principle: that faith's appropriation of the Lord Jesus makes good in us what He is. We are redeemed through faith in Him. We are re-constituted through faith in Him. We are perfected through faith in Him. We are glorified through faith in Him. But it is not just objective Â— it is a matter of our taking the position that all that is true of Him is true of Him for us.

How impossible it is to explain! But you and I have got to learn what it really means to take our stand, in faith, on the ground of what Jesus Christ is Â— because then something happens. Our troubles arise out of standing upon the ground of what we are, or upon appearances or arguments Â— something objective Â— instead of taking our position upon the ground that the Son of God became incarnate, not only to work out, but Himself to be, my redemption. And by faith on Him there is redemption. He came to be my re-constitution: and, by faith on Him, through the action of the Holy Spirit, something happens, and I am re-constituted. He came to be my perfection: and through faith on Him the Holy Spirit takes up the work of my perfecting. He came to be my glorification: and faith gives the Holy Spirit His requisite, essential, indispensable ground for bringing us also to the glory of Christ, to be glorified together with Him.

Until we believe, and believe on to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit stands back. You may perhaps deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive the Holy Spirit. You cannot have one foot on one ground and one foot on another. If you have got one foot on what you are, and the other foot Â— you think Â— on what Christ is, you are a divided person. The Holy Spirit does not commit Himself: He stands back and waits. He says, Put both feet on Christ, and then I will begin to do something.

#### **The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/15 14:58**

##### **Chapter 2 - The Earthly Life Of The Lord Jesus**

When we ask the question: Why the earthly life of the Lord Jesus? Â— it is clear that that question implies and contains within itself other questions. For instance: Why was it necessary for Him to be here for something over thirty-three years? Again: Why was it necessary for by far the greater part of that time to be spent in private, and, so far as we are concerned, in secret? We shall try to answer these, and other, subsidiary questions, to some extent at least, as we go on.

Much has been made of the earthly life of Christ Â— usually for the purpose of showing that there was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, and what a good Person He was, and how much greater He was as a teacher than other teachers; or at most to show that He was more than just a man. There may be other purposes for writing books on the life of Jesus, but these usually comprehend the object. Of course, seeing that Jesus has become a great historical world figure, it is interesting to know where He was born, where and how He was brought up, where He went about in the country, what He taught, the miracles that He performed, and so on. All this has provided material for a great deal of discussion and controversy. The miracles have provided much food for the psychologists, and His teaching for the theologians and the doctrinaires. But when you have said all that you can say and written all that you can write on those matters, you may not have advanced much beyond the human story. The human story, as such, appeals very much to the emotion, to the imagination, but it does not change character. However fascinating, impressive and moving it may be, if you just leave it there you have stopped short of the real meaning of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus.

The earthly life of our Lord was not intended for those purposes. The record of His life was not intended merely to provide us with data and information and interesting matter about a certain man Â— however great and wonderful Â— who lived so long ago, in such-and-such a part of the world, and said and did such-and-such. He did not come for that. He was not here for thirty years and a little more for that purpose at all. His life was intended to show Â— not merely that He was in many respects different from other men, but that He was of a different order of mankind from all the rest, the best included. Until you have clearly recognized that, you have not found the key to the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. He met some of the best types of men of His day, but between Him and them there was a great gulf fixed Â— there was no passing from the one side to the other.

##### **A Different Order Of Mankind**

Jesus was a mystery. He was not just mysterious —He was a mystery. He was not just misunderstood. So many have said about Him, "He was an altogether misunderstood Man". No, He was not just misunderstood —He was un-understood, and that is very different. Jesus did not conform to any of the principles and methods upon which this world is run. He did not do what He was expected to do, either by the world or by His friends. Often He put that expectation back: He did not instantly fulfil it because He was asked to, or because it was expected of Him. He put a gap between the expectation and whatever He did. And into that gap you must place this uniqueness that there was about Him, as an order of Man —His "otherness" from other men. If you try to fit Him in, try to make Him a part of the established human order, try to show how He did this and did that, in a kindly way, just because He was so kind, you have altogether missed the point.

Why, for instance, when that embarrassing situation arose at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and it was presented to Him as His opportunity, did He put it back with something that sounded very much like a rebuff? So far as the expectation of people was concerned, nothing might ever have happened — but for something else that belonged to another realm altogether. And we find the same kind of thing repeated in other connections. He did not do what people expected Him to do — He very often did what they never expected Him to do. He did the unexpected — took people, not only completely by surprise, but right out of their depth. They just could not follow Him in some of the things that He did. He did not go where people expected Him to go, and when, and so conform to their order and programme. And He certainly did not say what He was expected to say — far from it. On the contrary, He said many things that He was not expected to say — difficult things, shocking things, offending things.

Now, Jesus was not just being different, being awkward, being singular. There are people who behave like that, but on entirely different grounds. They are merely trying to be singular, exceptional, unusual, to do the unexpected, to be awkward. I knew a Christian man, some years ago, who had gained a great name in this world, and who, by reason of the tremendous amount that had been made of him, had developed an ultra-self-consciousness. On one occasion I was having a talk with him in the garden, and after a little time I suggested that we should come into the house. I took him by the arm to walk up with him, and he instantly drew himself up stiff, stuck his heels in and absolutely refused to budge! "Well!" I thought, "What is this?" I had to wait a minute or two — evidently until he had satisfied himself that it was right to move — and then he relaxed and we walked up together — but not arm-in-arm! I had learnt my lesson. I came to know that he had adopted a manner on this: that he was never going to allow himself to be influenced, or affected, or led, or in any way moved, by another human being. He had come to such an "ultra" place that he would not even walk arm-in-arm with a brother Christian unless the Lord told him to!

Ultimately, of course, it developed into quite a serious complex. But you see what I mean. It is possible to act like that on an altogether false basis.

Jesus was not like that. He may have seemed to behave like that at times, but it was not on that basis. We need to be very clear about this—this strange, this unknown way with Him, which often perplexed and mystified, sometimes disappointed, and sometimes even annoyed and angered. But these are facts; these are very clearly recognizable features of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. They were not of the order of which I have spoken—an ultra-self-consciousness, a deliberate standing apart, trying to be different from others, wearing a strait jacket, unbending, unyielding. There was nothing of that about Him. We have got to explain it, for there is no mistaking it. There He is — an unknown Man.

#### The Negative Side: 'Circumcised In Heart'

Here then, was a Man — with a capital "M" — living a human life on a basis different from that of every other man. There was a negative and a positive aspect of that fact. The negative aspect was this: He was, if I may bring in the expression here, "circumcised in heart". That is, He was utterly separated from the self-principle in every way, in His mind, heart and will. He would not use His mind, or think His thoughts, or arrive at His judgments, on the basis of any self-principle whatsoever. Nor had self any place in His feelings or His will. Here is a Man Who has a soul—a mind, a heart and a will— constituting Him a true human being, but in whose soul the self-principle has been put completely aside.

You cannot make Him do anything along the line of ordinary human reasoning, however right or good it may seem to be. "They have no wine —therefore..." An argument comes in, a reasoning. "Therefore" ...this and that and some other thing, constituting a very good case for His intervening and doing something. It could be argued from almost every standpoint as being a thing that He should do: from the standpoint of human kindness, from the standpoint of the

vindication of His mission, the establishment of His Divine Person. Yes, you can argue it from any and every standpoint, but He is not moving on a mind that is influenced by any kind of argument. The only consideration with Him is: Does My Father will it? and does My Father will it now? and does My Father will it in this way? Those are the things that influence His mind and His heart and His will — His soul. Until He is sure about that, nothing on this earth or in this world, no argument or appeal or case, will get Him to move. For He is doing something, and we are going to see presently what it is that He is doing.

I have said He was utterly "circumcised in heart". That is a biblical phrase (see Rom. 2:29). We need to understand the meaning of it. It means that in the heart there has taken place an absolute severance between two things. If you like, you can substitute "soul" for "heart"; it is the inner man. Something had been done in Him inwardly, and He kept steadfastly to that ground to the end. It was upon that ground, in one form or another, that the fiercest battles in His life were fought. Sometimes the assault came through an innermost friend and disciple: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou mindest... the things of men", (Matt. 16:22–23). "Your outlook is that of men — merely on the level of men. I do not belong to that realm of men in which you move. Other men may listen to your argument, be influenced, persuaded; but as for Myself — no!" And so it is, right to the end: He steadfastly held to that ground — the ground of what we will content ourselves by calling the ground of inward heart circumcision.

That, as I have said, was the focal point of Satan's persistent endeavour: reason, argument, as to why He should, or should not, do certain things. It is a matter of argument, sometimes the argument of absolute necessity. "Your body demands bread or you will die. Necessity requires that you turn these stones into bread". So say men, but not the Divine Son of God, not the Son of Man. Jesus repudiated that argument absolutely.

Yes, Satan's focal point of every attack was just there — to try to get Him to do, to act, to move, to decide, according to human standards, to be influenced by the ordinary dictates of human life as we know it; and He refused. That being the focal point of all satanic attacks and efforts, that was the realm of His absolute victory over Satan and the world. "The prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). What was he looking for? — the self-principle. If only he could get that moving, if only he could stir that into action, through mind, heart or will, the same thing would happen with the last Adam as happened with the first, and the Kingdom would go again into the hands of the Devil. But he has met a different kind of Man, Who is not coming out to him on that ground at all. Jesus did not just say, "The Devil is coming to Me...", "Satan is coming to Me..." ; He said: "The prince of this world cometh" — implying the whole principle of this world, as Satan's Kingdom; the self-principle of the prince of this world. But — "he hath nothing in Me".

#### The Positive Side: Committed To The Will Of The Father

That, then, is the negative side of His life. The positive aspect was that He was so utterly committed to the will of His Father. He was not only refusing, resisting, repressing, suppressing, putting away. The motive of it all was His absolute committal to the will of the Father. The will of the Father was the dominant thing, the most positive reality in His life, from beginning to end. And the will of the Father came down to every detail in the most meticulous way. This was established in His whole life on the earth.

It was established first in the thirty years of what we call His private life. Those thirty years were also divided into two. You notice that division in the Gospel by Luke, chapter 2. First, from His dedication in the Temple until He reached the age of twelve years: this is what is said over this section: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.", (v. 40). Then from the age of twelve onwards: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in grace with God and men", (v. 52). We will not now stop to analyze that. It is subject to an analysis which is very profitable, if you care to make it. You see the realms in which this progress was made — physical, mental and spiritual; and over all the verdict is: the grace of God. The grace of God, the Divine approval, Divine satisfaction, was over His life. He was growing up before the Lord as one well-pleasing. Why? Right at the very heart: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" — or, if you like the alternative translation, "that I must be in My Father's house?" (v. 49). Whatever that meant, it certainly meant a Father-consciousness above the ordinary, natural relationship. Note that it is set right in the midst of something that caused a good deal of heart-burning and perplexity to his parents after the flesh.

Yes, there was an utter committal to the will of His Father, and it was established for thirty years in the ordinary, common way of life. I think that is a tremendous thing. Why were there thirty years in silence and in secret so far as we are concerned? We have so little light upon it. Why? Just for that same reason. If you want the explanation, go back to the Old Testament. You remember that the Levites commenced their service at the age of thirty years. Luke tells us

about Jesus beginning His ministry: "Jesus... when He began... was about thirty years of age ...", (Luke 3:23). The Lord Jesus was in type a Levite, although He came of the tribe of Judah. (Compare Heb. 7:13-14). But the official entry of a Levite into his ministry at the age of thirty was never willy-nilly. There was a history lying behind this. The Levite history, the Levite life, the Levite behaviour lay behind it. And, although we have nothing that makes this quite clear to us, perhaps because there was never any occasion for it, I venture to say that, if any young man of the tribe of Levi in that old dispensation had been living a profligate life, he would never have become an officiating Levite upon reaching the age of thirty years. No, the seal had to be set upon those thirty years, that the man had walked before God. And the same principle was brought to bear in the life of Jesus: God tested Him, proved Him, in the ordinary ways of life.

That ought to be taken by us very seriously, as a principle of God's approval. You may be longing to get out into ministry: God may be longing for you to be fit to be brought out into ministry! In all the ordinary ways of life you are going through it, you are being tested; the eye of God is upon you. Remember that when Jesus, at thirty years of age, came to the Jordan, Heaven was opened and a voice said: "In Thee I am well pleased", (Mark 1:11). I think that covered the thirty years: it spoke of the grace of God in thirty years of ordinary life, and made it possible for Him to take up His ministry. Perhaps we are not so right in saying "ordinary life", seeing how the Devil tried to get Him right at the beginning (Matt. 2:13-18).

But, whatever the thirty years represented, there is no question that the three-and-a-half years public ministry ratified, through intense fires, the fact that He was committed without any reservation to the will of His Father. Those three-and-a-half years were a period of the intensest fires, to make Him deviate a little bit, in personal, self-consideration, from doing His Father's will. By every bribe of "the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof", and by every threat of the ignominy of the Cross, Satan sought to bring about this deviation from the will of God. Jesus fought it through to the end.

#### The Reality Of His Humanity

Why the earthly life? First of all, to establish the reality of His humanity. You see, in the old dispensation there had been many Divine appearances in human form. No one dare be dogmatic on this matter, but it may well have been that the very Son of God Himself was in some of those so-called 'theophanies'. God came in human form, so that those visited first spoke of them as men, or a man, and then woke up to the realization: "I have seen God—God was here!" But this earthly life of thirty-three years was no theophany: this was real humanity. This was not a transient guise, a passing form, just a visitation. This was a Man, true humanity, on this earth for over thirty-three years. This was not an angelic visitor. It was a Man. And I think this is one reason or explanation, amongst others, why at His entry into the world He was born as a babe and started from the beginning. He did not arrive as a visitant in full maturity; He began right at the beginning, coming in—although with a difference—yet by the same door as other men, and living here, through infancy, childhood and youth, into Manhood, accepting a life on the basis of absolute dependence on God as other men.

If you think, you will see that there is so much that bears this out. Why must He in infancy be hurried away by Joseph and Mary, out of the country, because His life is sought after? Why does not Heaven come in and assert itself for His absolute protection in miraculous ways, in order to preserve Him and to meet those forces that were against Him? Whereas He had to be taken and run away with, be got out of the way, like any other child! The fact is that He is living our life, He is subject to our experiences. There may be miraculous elements working behind, but on the face of things He is hungry, He is thirsty, He is tired, He is pursued and sought after—He is "going through it", in the same way as you and I. He is living a human life. He has voluntarily accepted the basis of absolute dependence upon His Father. And the Father is not performing a series of miracles—although in truth the whole thing is a miracle.

#### A Life Of Faith

For this reason, like other men, He has got to overcome by the principle of faith. He has no other life, in principle, than you and I have: it is the life of faith. Faith had to be exercised for Him before He could exercise it for Himself. I have no doubt that Joseph and Mary had considerable exercise about that matter. They had to look it squarely in the face, and either say, "Well, we can trust God to look after Him: we will not do anything, we will just trust God"; or else say, "We will go, and trust God". In either case, it was faith—faith for Him. And then the time came for Him to exercise faith for Himself, and everything for Him had to be on the basis of faith, as much as it has for you and for me.

Are you thinking: "What about His deity? What about His miraculous powers of knowledge and action? Surely He knew in a supernatural way; He exercised powers quite supernatural. That is not humanity!" Let us get this very definitely



cleared up in our minds. It does not contradict anything that I have said. Note: Jesus never used His miraculous powers of Deity for Himself. There is only one instance which it might be thought could be set over against that statement: the occasion when He had no money to pay His taxes, and sent Peter down to the sea-shore, and there was a fish with a coin in its mouth (Matt. 17:24-27). You might say, "It would be very nice to have that power to pay our rates!" Ah, but be careful — it is not quite as clear as that. It does not really contradict what I have said. He never used supernatural, Godhead powers for Himself, and they never took Him off the ground of dependence upon God and the basis of faith. Note that even in that one instance there was no creative action. It was superior intelligence. There was a fish, and that fish had a coin, and somehow He knew it was there.

#### Unbelief Untouched By Miracles

But let us pursue that. Take the miracles. The miracles related, on the one side, to His Deity: but, even so, they did not have a character - changing effect upon the people who saw them or participated in them. They were but for a testimony to Who He was. Do you get the significance of that? With all His miracles, in the end the principle of unbelief has not been rooted out of a single individual! That is the tragedy of it all. That is a tremendous argument. Though they saw all that He did, the deep-rooted unbelief was untouched. The amazing thing — even with the disciples themselves — was that they were still capable of deep-seated unbelief. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe..." (Luke 24:25). "He upbraided them with their unbelief..." (Mark 16:14). With all that they saw, it did not touch character, it did not touch their nature.

It was, therefore, given but for a testimony — a testimony as to Who He was. That is one side. For, you see, there are two sides to this matter. There is the side of His Deity, as John sums up everything: "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.", (John 20:31). It was for a testimony to Who He was essentially. But withal, it did not have such an effect upon their natures that because of these things they got rid of unbelief. Yes — for a moment they may have believed on Him; but that is something less than having unbelief deeply and radically dealt with. The miracles did not do that, and Jesus did not expect that they would. He made it perfectly clear that He was not building upon His miracles any hope in that direction. He was still dependent upon the Father for the real effect.

And here let me say, in parenthesis — it is something to think about — that it is not the things that He does for us, but the life of the Son of Man, in all its mighty potency, its power, its principle, in us, that makes the difference. He might heal your body of a chronic disease, of something that is most certainly going to prove fatal in the ordinary way, but that does not necessarily mean that the deep-seated unbelief of your heart will be dealt with. After a few years you might argue or explain that away psychologically, or in some other way, and lose the real impact of it. No, those things done for us, in any realm, even though they might seem miracles, do not touch our real nature. Make no mistake: signs and wonders are not the ultimate argument — they are not. The ultimate argument is the change of our very being, deep-seated and deep-rooted, and anything that does not do that has failed of the ultimate purpose of His coming. It is not what He would do for us, miraculously, by outward things: it is what He Himself is in us, as another kind of Person. That is what matters. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory"; not Christ working miracles for you.

#### The Superior Powers Of Man As God Intended Him

But then, there is something yet more to be said. He did have superior powers for doing and for knowing. While I am not for a moment suggesting that that had nothing to do with His Deity, His Divine Nature, it might very well be that that superior — what we might call supernatural — power and intelligence were, if I may put it this way, the "normal" of the kind of being that Jesus is, as Man. If, without any question of participation in Deity, a man or men can be brought into such a relationship with God as that Which He had, they, too, might have that superior intelligence, and might know a great deal more than the ordinary person knows of what is taking place in the world around. It would not be just through psychic means, but by the very intuition of a spirit link with God. I venture to suggest that — putting aside all that is psychical — such power is not absolutely unknown to Christian men and women. Peter raised the dead; the Apostles healed the sick, performed miracles. Were they God? No, but by the Spirit of Jesus Christ they were brought into such a relationship with Him as to have His powers delegated to them. "Greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father", (John 14:12).

There is a deep significance in a word that He uttered, as recorded for us in John 5:26-27. It is perhaps far too deep for our understanding, and I do not venture into those depths. "The Father... gave... to the Son... authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man". Not because He is the Son of God — "because He is the Son of Man". It opens a very big field of enquiry, and we will not enter it; but my point is this: that, Deity apart — I am not arguing for a moment

not against the Deity of Christ in knowledge or power, supernatural ability — may it not be that a humanity so related to and so indwelt by God, according to His original mind, should have these powers which we now call "super-natural"? It only means "of another order of intelligence", of knowledge, of ability to do. It means that man is lifted on to another level of ability and understanding, above the ordinary level of man as we know him. Is this not true of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the Church?

Why, then, the earthly life? To set forth the kind of humanity that God wants, to demonstrate through a human life what man would be if God had him after His own heart. I believe that is the answer. And if it was but thirty-three-and-a-half years, what does that say? Coming over the centuries I hear the prophet's voice saying: "He was cut off out of the land of the living", (Isa. 53:8); "His life is taken from the earth", (Acts 8:33). His life was cut off in mid-manhood. Men did not let Him finish it. Men took action that this should not go on. Men brought it to — yes, from one standpoint — an untimely end. Ah, Satan will not have this kind of man here longer than he can help.

But this kind of man can only be completed on the other side. We anticipate our "octave" when we just hint that He has not left His manhood, He has not left His humanity; He abides there, on the other side, as Man. But He has done here all that was needed. He has demonstrated what man would be if God had Him according to His mind. And He has taken action that the rest of the prophecy shall be fulfilled: "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days", (Isa. 53:10). He was cut off, but He shall prolong His days: the days of His humanity are prolonged in His Church. That is what we are called to. By painfully slow processes, owing to the infirmity of our flesh, He is working to make us men and women after His own kind. And the heart of it all is: the complete severance from the principle of the self-life.

#### The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/16 10:08

##### Chapter 3 - The Cross

We have said that these eight aspects, or "notes", in the scale of redemption, succeed one another in a harmonious sequence, each one following the other and leading to the next. Our answer to the first question — Why the incarnation? was as threefold: the redemption of man, the reconstitution of man, and the perfecting and glorifying of man. In seeking to answer the second question — Why the earthly life? — we sought to indicate the end in view in this whole redemptive process, as exemplified in the earthly life of our Lord as Son of Man — the model. The earthly life, so fully lived under every test, was intended, in the purpose of God, to set forth the different kind of person that God has in view through redemption and reconstitution and perfecting to final glorification. It is necessary for us to take up the inclusive issue of all these phases, seeing how one leads to the other, and at the same time what each one represents.

But, before I go further, let me say this. The point is that God has put right down into this world, into the midst of mankind, a new kind of Man, Who is not just better, more or less, than other men, but different altogether from other men; and has, in effect, said, "That is the Man that I have in view, and eternally it has been My purpose to conform to that image". How important it is, therefore, for us to understand the real nature and meaning of the life of our Lord Jesus as lived here on this earth. It is not just a beautiful story, about a man living and working and teaching, in a country somewhere in this world, far away and long ago. But, right up to date, a Man is presented to us, as altogether different from us in constitution and yet as God's pattern for His working in us. That is something very important.

##### The On-Drive Of Evil At The Crucifixion

So, then, those two points lead us to the third: Why the Cross? Let us approach this by looking for a moment at the record, and trying to get into the very atmosphere, evil as it was, of what took place on that day which we commemorate as Good Friday. We will take two verses from Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost.

— "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay.", (Acts 2:22–23; A.S. V.).

If we could, as it were, get inside those words, and really grasp their significance, we should have the answer to our question: Why the Cross?

Let us try to sense what was happening. If you have recently read in the Gospels the accounts of the events leading to the crucifixion, you will be able to recall the scene. On the one side, it is impossible, taking everything into account, to fail to recognize a tremendous on-drive over this matter of crucifying Jesus. This is not just human. There is something here of an impelling force — an impelling, evil force — behind it. No argument will stem it, no appeal will weaken it; it will be

influenced by no consideration whatsoever. When they cried: "His blood be on us, and on our children", (Matt. 27:25), it was as though there was an implacable determination, set upon carrying this thing through—no matter what it meant—to the last degree, to the very uttermost. From that side, there was a fierce, awful, terrible on-drive of the evil powers to do Him to death, and it seemed that nothing whatever could stem that tidal wave of evil.

On the other side, there is Pilate—Pilate seeking, by every recourse conceivable to him, both personally to get out of this and officially to avoid it, to stop it. See how much there is that comes in to give him a case, to make his position a strong one, even to the message from his wife: "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous Man", (Matt. 27:19). But it is as though a hidden voice says: "Pilate, it is no good: wriggle, argue, say and do what you like—it is no good: it is going to happen. You may be held responsible from one standpoint, but you cannot help yourself". The on-drive of evil forces, the helplessness of man and office and temporal powers, and so many other factors, might have come in to weigh in this issue.

#### “The Determinate Counsel And Foreknowledge Of God”

But behind it all is another factor. The Devil may be blindly forging on, and man may be helplessly trying to counter; but behind Devil and man lies the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", (Acts 2:23). The Cross is God's crisis in which He says: "We are going to have this thing out, we are going to settle this issue at long last, once and for all. Nothing is going either to misconstrue it or to prevent it. The Devil may mean murder; I know what I mean by this. The Devil may be blindly driving on to destroy Him, but I know what I mean by it. I will take that up in relation to eternal counsels and foreknowledge. Man may try to stop it, prevent it: but no—the hour has come, and we are going to settle this thing. This is the Crisis of the Ages; the whole issue is going to be settled today".

But what issue? Of course, the whole thing is far, far too great and many-sided for us to cover. It reaches so far up and so far down, so far back and so far on. All that we know about the Cross is only a fragment compared with what we shall know through eternity. We can only say a very little about this, compressing it into one or two things which answer the question, Why the Cross? The answer, as I have said, is inherent in the words which we have read in Acts 2.

What is the issue? What is the crisis? Why the Cross? Whenever we find ourselves in the presence of the Cross, whether in type in the Old Testament—the altar, the sacrifice, the fire, and so on—or in reality in the New Testament, we are always in the presence of three things: sin, righteousness and judgment.

#### (1) Sin

What do we mean by sin? What does the Bible mean by sin?—this far-reaching thing, like an octopus but with countless limbs and suckers—this thing called "sin". What does the Bible mean by sin? If the Cross of the Lord Jesus was the crisis, and God was going to settle this thing once and for all, what was it that had reached the point of the crisis, what was it that He was going to settle? Let us here get away from sins—we are not talking about sins. Sins are only the fruit, or the outcrop, of the root—sin. Sin does not begin with the things that we do or do not do. Sin is something far deeper than our wrong-doings—our commissions or our omissions. Sins may be forgiven, sins may be remitted; but sin is another thing.

Now let us trace this thing as far as we can. In the Old Testament, sin, even before Adam's act, centred in God and His alternative. God, or His alternative—that is the focal point of sin. There is an inclusive word in the Old Testament, a word which includes and covers all other words used for sin, and that word is "iniquity". That covers such words as "transgression", "trespass", and others. The inclusive, comprehensive word for sin is "iniquity", and not until we understand that word do we really understand what sin is. This word "iniquity" at its very root means "perversity", "lawlessness". It is not just the violation of certain laws, but a spirit of lawlessness and rebellion. That found its first expression, as the Bible tells us, before Adam sinned. Adam was only caught in something that had already started. The rebellion took place somewhere where God is, in relation to God's purposes—His purposes, as we have reasons to believe, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, as Heir, the "appointed heir of all things". Rebellion was found in the heart of one exalted being, and then disseminated by that one amongst angels; and so a whole rebellious hierarchy arose, and was cast out, and we are told that they are reserved in everlasting bonds unto judgment (Jude 6).

Iniquity, then, is rebellion, it is lawlessness. "Ye by the hand of lawless men..." We have got right to the heart of the thing, you see. This drive is from Hell itself. No appeal is heeded to law, reason, argument, consideration, sympathy, wisdom, or anything else—not even to the very children's well-being. No, this thing has run amok, it has broken loose, it has come out at last. There has come into the centre of the earthly, human stage One Who is the focal point of it all, and He

has drawn it right out. No longer can it go masked, no longer can it work secretly; it is out. He has drawn it out, He is the occasion of it. The hosts of evil surge round Him: to use the prophetic words of the Psalm, "they compassed me about like bees ", (Ps. 118:12); but, in the words of the Apostle, "He stripped off principalities and powers", (Col. 2:15). He has drawn them out.

Yes, in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God the thing is up for decision—this whole matter of basic, fundamental rebellion, which started in Satan, spread to a host of angels who entered into complicity with him, and came down into this world. By man opening the door, the door of his soul, as we saw earlier, the thing came into him, and now every child of Adam has that deep-rooted thing in his or her nature: rebellion against God. Sooner or later you will discover it, if you have never yet done so. Let God put you to some of the tests to which He put His Son, and see whether there is any rebellion in your heart, in your nature, against God. Under testing, trial, opposition, or suffering, we find that it is there, ready to come up. It is in us.

Very well; that was taken account of by God. He said, "We are going to settle this"; and that is the meaning of the Cross. Firstly, this spirit of lawlessness and rebellion, in all its ugliness, all its evil, all its sinister character, is dragged out into the open; and then, in the Cross, not just the evil in abstract, but the person responsible for it, is met and dealt with.

#### Ground For Satan

For sin is never looked upon just as something abstract; it is always personal—it is always a matter of Satan. The whole question is always this: Is Satan getting an advantage, is Satan being given ground? Too often we make light of these things. We think of "failure", we speak about "weakness" and "imperfections". We get offended, we get upset; we lose love, perhaps we lose our temper; and then we say that that is our weakness, our failing, our imperfection, our fault. Well, that may be so, but God always says: "That is ground for Satan"; and that is what makes it so heinous, so much more evil. Because, you see, it is Satan who is all the time trying to work upon our 'weaknesses' and produce such ground, and then to come upon it and use it—both as an accusation against us, to bring us back into that bondage from which we are redeemed, and to have an accusation to God. Always remember that it is this personal thing that is the essence of iniquity, that constitutes sin. God does not look at sin apart from the person of Satan: it is always that one that He has in view. And He would say to us: "Now, don't forget: if you slipped up, that is not just something in itself—that is very good ground for Satan; and unless you take it away from him, and get it cleared up and covered, he is going to enlarge it, establish it, and consolidate it, and it is going to be very much more difficult for you presently to clear it up. This is not just an incident, a mistake, a mishap: there is a person, there is a whole evil system at work in relation to it".

Yes, and what is the effect that he is seeking to bring about? Something antagonistic to God—rebellion, lawlessness. The Lord Jesus, while He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, was the Lamb of God, that took away the sin of the world (1 Pet. 2:24; John 1:29). Do you not think it is very wonderful—seeing that sin is iniquity, rebellion, lawlessness, is this thing that is always breaking away and running riot against God—that a Lamb should deal with it? A lamb is the very symbol of yieldedness, is it not? "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter ", (Is. 53:7): no rebellion there, no lawlessness there. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter": exactly the other extreme from this lawless, rebellious thing. The Lamb of God took away sin by the utterness of His yieldedness to God. He undid the unyieldedness of Satan. I think it is impressive. You see the principles that are at work, mighty principles embodied in two persons: the principle of lawlessness in Satan, the principle of yieldedness in Christ. These two things are in mortal combat, and the Lamb overcomes.

Does it not say much for the work of the Cross, the effect of the Cross? Do you see why the Cross, and why the Cross in you and me? What we are to inherit from the Cross—what it means as an abiding principle of activity in us? If the Cross really does work in us, we shall become more and ever more yielded to God, unresisting, compliant, of the spirit of the Lamb. What a conflict that was! It was the conflict between two natures: the conflict between sin, in the particular sense of rebellion and lawlessness, on the one side; and the spirit of—"Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God", and "a body hast Thou prepared for Me.", (Heb. 10:7, 5), on the other; and by that body on the tree He dealt with that other thing—with the embodied iniquity of this universe in Satan. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.", (John 12:31).

We feel our helplessness in trying to cope with this matter of the Cross; it was such an immense thing that happened then. I come back to this: God said, "We will settle this here and now, once and for all". Sin, in the sense in which we have spoken of it, was met there in its full tide— "Jordan overflowing all its banks"—what a tide!—and was fully and finally exhausted.

#### (2) Righteousness

If we said that righteousness was just the opposite of sin, we should, of course, have said in a word nearly all that could be said about it. But let us look at it more closely, and begin by examining the word itself. Righteousness is an inclusive word. Just as "iniquity" is inclusive of other aspects of sin, so "righteousness" is inclusive of other concepts. There is the word "holiness", for instance; there is the word "sanctification"; there is the word "consecration". All these are gathered in to this word "righteousness". What does it mean?

I am sure we shall not forget sin. It is written now in deep, dark, black letters. Sin is rebellion; sin is lawlessness; sin is that which throws off the government of God and puts Him out of His place and makes choice of the alternative to God. Of course, when we sin we do not consciously mean that— that is not thought out and intended; but that is what is implied and what is involved in reality.

What, then, is the essence of this word "righteousness"? Righteousness is that nature of God which is perfectly consistent, perfectly pure, perfectly transparent. Different symbols are used in the Bible for the nature of God, such as the crystal, and the jasper. It is that in which there is absolutely no mixture, in which there are no two things contrary to each other. For the Bible makes it perfectly clear that mixture, or contradiction, is what is most abhorrent to God. More than anything else, God abhors mixture— two contrary elements brought together, two different realms brought into association, the two being different in constitution. We recall some of the Old Testament types of that: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together", (Deut. 22:10–11). These are two different realms. Linen draws off bodily warmth; wool keeps it in: so there is a conflict in the two things.

These are only simple illustrations or figures of something very deep. God hates mixture; His very nature is against contrary elements. His nature is absolutely transparent, consistent, pure. And that is righteousness. It was for that that the prophets were always appealing. Unrighteousness was found in dealings; that is, people were being robbed by deceitful methods. They were not fair, not square, not straight. Satan is the great mixer, the great deceiver, the great corrupter, the great polluter. There is nothing transparent about him, nothing straight about him; he is always coming round, in some way, to get an advantage by unfairness, by cowardice.

Now, the Cross of the Lord Jesus was the crisis of this matter of righteousness. It was the other side. He "offered Himself without spot unto God", (Heb. 9:14). Here is something pure: there is no mixture here, no blemish here, no two things here; this is all one thing; this is all straight, this is all clear, this is all absolutely pure, transparent. You cannot find in Him any blemish of corruption. There is no clouding film; in Him there is no darkness. He had settled this matter of righteousness in His own Person and body, and established righteousness for ever, in type, as He came to His baptism, which was prefiguring His Cross. He said: "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.", (Matt. 3:15). He satisfied God on this matter of His own nature, as something absolutely pure. When Jesus said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", God responded immediately and said, "My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". "It is the offering that I want, the offering that I seek: the offering satisfies Me". He "offered Himself without spot unto God". The question of righteousness is settled in Him, in the Cross.

### (3) Judgment

Sin, righteousness; and now judgment. What is that? We usually limit the idea of judgment to one thought— that is, penalty. The word

"judgment" is a larger word than that in the Bible. Judgment, we could say, has three parts. To take an illustration from the Book of Daniel: you remember Belshazzar's feast, and the handwriting on the wall, and how Daniel was brought in to interpret (Dan. 5:1–28). First of all, it means bringing something to have a decision given upon it, as to what it is. The first part here is: "Thou art weighed in the balances". That is the first part of judgment: being brought to be weighed up. Secondly, the putting of it into its proper category: "found wanting". When it has been determined what it is, that is the place to which it belongs. Thirdly, there is the pronouncement and execution of the sentence.

That is judgment in its threefold meaning. It is a big word. The Cross was that. God was saying, "We will settle what this thing is in its nature; we will put it into its proper place to which it belongs; and we will deal with it fully and finally". The thing was determined as to what it is: sin is not called by other names; it is called by its proper name—lawlessness, rebellion. For that is what sin is. It is against God. And it belongs to a realm that is away from God— the wilderness, the desolation, the place of the scapegoat, the place of the driven-away creature, driven from the very presence of God to where it belongs. When He bore our sins, when He was made sin for us, when, in that dire moment, He was made a curse for us, He was put in the place to which you and I belong. The thing was settled as to what it was, and driven out from the presence of God; the door was closed upon it, and the face of God for ever turned away from it. The judgment was carried out.

Yes, there are two sides to the Cross, but that was the judgment side. Of what? No, not the judgment of our sins— that may be included— but the judgment of our sin. "Him Who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.", (2 Cor. 5:21); that is, that we might be brought to the place where there are no two things in conflict, no two contradictory elements. And that begins on the very day when we — to use familiar, homely language — come to the Cross. When we come to the Lord Jesus and accept the work of His Cross for ourselves, there is given to us, there is brought into us, that transparent, pure, holy, righteous life of the Lord Jesus. It is a thing without mixture. We are all mixture, but that life has no mixture.

#### Clear As Crystal

And then, when we live by that life — and this is not only a statement of fact, but a very searching test — if you and I live by the life of the Son of God, we are going to become more and more transparent people, absolutely honest, absolutely straightforward, absolutely square. Anything that is not like that about us says that somehow or other we are counteracting or not moving with the life. The Cross involves us in that. So the end of the Bible gives us the picture of the City, as one of the symbols of the Church. In its entire constitution it is, as it says, like pure gold, or glass, or jasper (Rev. 21:11,18), and its river is the water of life, free and clear as crystal (22:1). It is all clear — that is the end of the work. This is a truly practical thing. About true Christians — Christians who are truly crucified with Christ — there ought to be a steady progressiveness in transparency, further and further away from duplicity, from deception, from murkiness, from everything of that kind. They should be clear as the light.

That is the answer, so very imperfectly, to — Why the Cross? Sin, righteousness, and the determination as to what is what: judgment determining, judgment placing. "Thou art weighed in the balances" — that is the first thing. "Thou art found wanting" — that is the second stage. "Thy kingdom is divided" — the third stage. It is all judgment. In the Cross the Lord Jesus effected all that.

That is, perhaps, the darker side. But it is a wonderful deliverance that the Lord Jesus has wrought for us in His Cross. Just think of what we were involved in! We were involved in Satan's sin, we were involved in his rebellion, our very natures were involved in it: but by His Cross He has saved us — "delivered us out of the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.", (Col. 1:13) — set us free, given us another nature, set us on the way to the City of God. That, as we know, is not geography, but spiritual condition; not an objective thing, but an inward, subjective state. What a day it will be when we are like that — absolutely free of the last trace of Satan's touch, the touch of the serpent, upon our human nature! What a great day that will be! But He started us on that way on the day in which we came to the Cross. And "He Who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ", (Phil. 1:6; A.S.V.).

#### The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/18 11:52

##### Chapter 4 - The Forty Days

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:49, 50). (The real sense of the first sentence is perhaps better given in the American Standard Revised Version: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and WOULD THAT IT WERE already kindled!")

"To whom He also shewed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.", (Acts 1:3).

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.", (Revelation 1:17-18).

We approach this particular aspect with the same question as that with which we have approached the others, and ask: Why the forty days? We shall sum up our answers to that question in three ways, although there are many more details than we can at present cover.

It is evident that those forty days were very much fuller than the records indicate. We have only ten recorded appearances of the Lord during the forty days, and five of them took place on the first day, leaving thirty-nine days for the remaining five (if ten were the full number of the appearances). But John, in speaking of the Lord's appearance after His resurrection, did say: "Many other signs... did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this

book", (John 20:30), and I think the context would lead us to conclude that these "many other signs" were done after His resurrection. This receives support from Luke, when he speaks of the forty days as containing "many proofs". So, they were evidently very full days, and that being so, the period was one of very great importance. It is not our purpose to stay with the various appearances, but to seek to understand the significance of the whole.

Now this note in the Octave of Redemption has not been struck nearly so strongly and firmly as it ought to have been. We know how sometimes, in a piano, a hammer becomes slightly worn or damaged, and when you go up the scale, that particular note is weaker than others, and you sense it. In the same way, I think that this note of the forty days has lost a good deal of its strength, or has not been given the strength and positiveness and fulness of volume which it ought to have been given. I trust that we shall see that as we proceed. For this was the great turning-point, and everything for Christianity rested upon this aspect of redemption's plan.

We can mention only a few of the things that rested upon these forty days, but they are sufficient to indicate what a tremendous period this was. Let us, however, note firstly that this is one of the great "forties" of the Bible. It is not an accident that there were forty days after His resurrection. There are eight major "forties" in the Bible — I leave you to look them up — but I mention some.

There was the great forty years of the life of Moses in Egypt, a time of deep preparation and testing, especially the testing of his heart. If all the wealth and treasure and learning of one of the greatest empires in history is open to you, at your disposal, your attitude to it constitutes a very good test of where your heart is! And Moses came through just such a test as that. At the end of those forty years, it was seen that his heart was not in that: his heart was for God and God's interests. Forty is always the number of probation, of testing and proving and deciding, and it was fairly decisive, was it not, with Moses at the end of those forty years.

But then commenced another forty years for Moses, in the land of Midian; and if the first forty was a testing of his heart, the second forty was a time of testing of his faith. What a tremendous probation that was — disappointed undertakings, disappointed hopes and expectations, and the consciousness that he was in the main responsible for it by his own folly. It was a tremendous test of faith. But he emerged.

Then there were the forty days and forty nights spent by Moses in the Mount. And what a time of testing that was for Israel down below! Yes, it was meant for that, I think, to find them out; and we know how they emerged from that time. They were proved, beyond any question. This issue was decided very definitely, and out from that God had to make His great movement concerning the Levites. That is a subject full of instruction; but we must leave it there.

And then there were Israel's own forty years in the wilderness. What a time of testing, probation and decision it was!

There are other forties, but we leap right over from there to the New Testament, to our Lord's testing for forty days in the wilderness — a time of unexampled testing; and, finally, to these forty days after the Resurrection. You see the character, the nature and meaning of forty, as a time of testing and proving, of establishing, deciding and settling. All that was gathered into the forty days that we are now to consider.

But look at some of the factors included in this period, as affecting Christianity, the Church, the future. All the work of the apostles hung upon this, as we shall see. It is so very clear. Of what good were they before the beginning of those forty days? What could they have done in the state they were in while He was in the tomb? He might have risen and gone to Heaven without their seeing Him, and then, in some way, it might have come to them that He was in Heaven — ah, but there would have been something of very great importance lacking if it had been like that! The door would have been open for all kinds of things to come in. But the Lord did not leave it like that. Their future work rested upon these forty days. The Lord was laying the foundation for everything with them during that period.

And the very existence of the Church rested upon the same ground; it demanded these forty days. That we shall see again presently, more fully. The ability of Christians to suffer, to endure and to conquer required these forty days. The many proofs — the ground soundly and solidly established — for the fact that He was alive, were essential for the steadfastness and overcoming of believers in all the sufferings of the days which lay ahead.

Again, the assurance of an eternal future for believers rested upon this. That death is not the end; that there is a life which has conquered death; and this life is for them, and that an eternal future is secured — it rested all upon these forty days.

Again, the very nature of the believer's resurrection body is established by these forty days. The Apostle Paul makes

that quite clear. In 1 Corinthians 15, it is positively stated that this mortal and corruptible shall be put off and immortality and incorruption shall be put on (vv. 53-54). The believer's body is to be "conformed to the body of His glory", (Phil. 3:21). But what is that body like? Have we anything to go upon? Is there any solid ground for believing that after resurrection we have a body? Well, the Lord was taking great pains to make it perfectly clear that He was no phantom, no disembodied spirit. "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having", (Luke 24:39). Our knowledge of a resurrection body, its features and nature, was established during those forty days.

And what of the hope concerning those who are asleep? That hope is established by this period. Still other factors could be mentioned, but the mention of these alone is sufficient to indicate that this was no unimportant phase of the great octave of redemption. It is truly redemption that is focused upon in this period. Everything had to be well founded and grounded, with "many proofs". As we said earlier, Luke was a meticulous historian: he tells us that he had taken pains to ascertain and make sure of the facts that he was recording; and he says that the Lord Jesus "showed Himself alive" to the disciples "by many proofs". As we have already seen, John said that the Lord did "many other signs... in the presence of His disciples". The object? To set the evidence, to leave things — or rather, one thing — beyond any doubt. What is it? The fact that Jesus lives — Jesus lives again after death! In other words: The Lord is risen!

So much for the more general side of this matter. We come now to look at the three more specific things which, to some degree at any rate, sum up the answer to the question: Why the forty days? What we have already seen provides, of course, a good answer, but that is not the whole answer.

#### The Release Of The Lord

Firstly, what did the Lord Jesus Himself conceive to be the particular value to Himself of His resurrection? The answer is in those words which we have read from Luke 12:49,50: "I came to scatter fire on the earth... O that it were already kindled! ...I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pent up until it be accomplished!" There is no doubt that He is speaking about the baptism of His Cross and passion; and He is looking through the baptism and thinking of the other side as His release. So the very first thing about these forty days is that it meant the release of the Lord. "How am I straitened, how am I pent up, how am I confined! I have come to scatter fire — to broadcast the fire over the whole earth: but here I am, tied to these few miles of a little country, tied to time, tied up to all the conditions of life here." Oh, how limited He was! limited in His own movement, limited in His disciples, limited in every way. He was longing to be free, to be out, to be released. He looked upon the resurrection as His release, and upon the Cross as the way of it.

Now, the Lord had, at the commencement of His ministry, made a great announcement. You remember that His first recorded ministry was in Nazareth, when He took up Isaiah 61 and spoke of the sevenfold aspect of His ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me... He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord", (Luke 4:16-19). Now there is little doubt that in His mind He was thinking of the year of Jubilee: because those words of Isaiah are an echo of the words used in Leviticus 25:10 concerning the Jubilee year, the fiftieth year, the year of release, when everything that had gone into bondage — man, woman, child, houses, land, or anything else — had to be released. And so, right at the commencement of His ministry, He said: "I am come in relation to God's jubilee, God's fiftieth year, the year of the Lord's release."

From the exodus of Israel to the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus there were thirty jubilees — an interesting piece of Bible study for you, if you like! Here is the thirtieth jubilee beginning. Now, when the Lord Jesus made the declaration in the words of the Scripture — "release to the captives... recovering of sight to the blind... liberty them that are bruised" — He knew what He meant. He made the announcement that He had come to bring in the greatest of all the Jubilees. The realization, the actual fulfilment of that, was still a little way ahead — perhaps three-and-a-half year ahead — but it took effect during, and as the outcome of, the forty days.

It took effect, first of all, as to Himself. By the resurrection He came into His own release, His complete emancipation. He was set free. See Him now: no geographical confinement can hold Him; — He is outside of all that. No time limits can hold Him; none of those old features of limitation and straitness now obtains. Time does not matter, distance does not matter: He is out. On the day of His resurrection He walked with two to Emmaus, broke bread with them, and... disappeared! They raced for their very lives back to Jerusalem to tell — but He was there before them! It was like that all the time. It is an instructive exercise to tabulate all the marks of His release during those forty days.

See now what He is doing with these disciples, the larger company who are to be the nucleus of His Church. He appeared to above five hundred brethren at one time, says Paul (1 Cor. 15:6). What is He doing? He is establishing the evidence for the fact that now He knows no limitations, He knows no bounds or bonds — He is free! That is a tremendous inheritance.



ritance for the Church, for us. How glad we are of that today! — to realize that geography does not matter, whether it be fifty, or five hundred, or five thousand miles; that time does not matter — none of these things matter: He is free! It is a tremendous thing for the Church to have it established by — “many proofs”. Our King James Authorized Version used to put in another word there — “many infallible proofs”. Even if it is not in the original text, the epithet is fully applicable.

#### The Release Of His Own

That was His side. But He had not only come to proclaim His own release and to secure it through the Cross. There was the other side, the release of His own: the release of the men and the release of the Church. Look at the men before: they were terribly tied up in themselves, were they not? They were manifestly limited in every way: in their capacities for spiritual things, in their understanding, in their spiritual intelligence. Paul’s word to the Corinthians might very well have applied to them: — “ye are straitened in your own affections”, (2 Cor. 6:12). But look at their release in these days! There is no doubt that it has happened — and it is happening all the time: you can see it growing! They have been released. You have only to think of the difference between Peter in the judgment hall and Peter on the day of Pentecost. One man limited, bound, straitened, defeated; the other man out, right out — a man emancipated.

They are all like that. It was the year of jubilee for them! The Lord Jesus had proclaimed it; by His resurrection He had brought it in; and by the sending forth of the Holy Spirit on the jubilee day, the fiftieth day (“Pentecost” means “fiftieth”), He had finally sealed it. The fiftieth year is jubilee, and Pentecost is the fiftieth day. Yes, it is jubilee, it is release; everything bears the stamp of that. And so Pentecost was the crown of those fifty days, and the making good especially of the values of the forty. It was their day of release!

If you and I were really in the good of these forty days, we, too, should be liberated and released men and women. Think of Thomas. Was ever a man more tied up than Thomas? He was tied up with himself, and tied up with his own temperament. He had that kind of temperament, you know, that does not believe anything unless it has absolute proof. It can never take anybody else’s word for it — it must have everything proved and demonstrated. What an unhappy fellow he was! — “Except I shall see... I will not believe”, (John 20:25). That shut him up to a little prison of his own soul. No Gospel, no good news, not even the very best news that you can bring, is any good to one like that, because they won’t have it, they just can’t believe it. “Yes, but that is, after all, only what you say” — that is their reaction. “You say that, you believe that: I have no proof that it is so”. Poor Thomas is representative of a whole temperamental class.

But look at the man a few days later. The Lord soon settled all that for Thomas — settled it so thoroughly that when, eight days later, he was invited by the Lord, with the words: — “Reach hither thy hand...”, to consider and test the evidence for himself, it is never recorded that he did so. He could only say: — “My Lord and my God.” He is overwhelmed — but he is a man released. The same thing was true of them all: each one of them needed release — and that release came during the forty days. Then they were men out! There they were, standing up together on the day of Pentecost — men who were free! The resurrection of the Lord Jesus ought to have that effect in you and in me. It ought to release us from ourselves and our own little world — and thank God it does, if we come vitally into it. If you do not know that in experience, that is nevertheless your inheritance. These forty days are not just a chapter in history; the value of them is your inheritance: it is for you — for us all. This is not a point of Christian doctrine; this is an up-to-date power for every life, offered to our faith to take hold of, for our release from ourselves. It was the year of their release, but it is also the year of our release, the Church’s release. The jubilee is not over yet.

#### The Integration Of The Scattered Flock

We come now to the third thing. The Lord Jesus had said to them, as He was going to the Cross, as He was with them on the mount of Olives in the last hours before the Passion: — “All ye shall be offended in Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad”, (Matt. 26:31). What a scattering took place! They one and all forsook Him; they were broken up into fragments, “all over the place”, as we might say, like a shattered vessel. They were outwardly in pieces, as a band, and inwardly in pieces, as men. His word — “scattered” — was very truly realized. Now look at the forty days. What is He doing? He is bringing together again all the pieces, He is collecting all the fragments. Here, and there, and there, He is finding those pieces. Two have gone off in this direction, one is here, others are there; there is no sign of any oneness about them. But now, during the forty days, He is finding them all, collecting them up, bringing them all together. At the end He has got them all together, and in a “togetherness” that had never been before, in a oneness that they had never yet known. This is the value of the forty days.

But remember, things could not have been otherwise. There were all the elements of disintegration in them before, and

so it had to be— it could not be otherwise. Now that wants thinking about, because in those eleven men you have the Church in representation. They are a picture of the Church in division, all broken up into fragments, with no mutual confidence— doubting one another, suspecting one another, not believing one another— a broken-up Church, a divided Church, a scattered Church. That is how they were, simply because of the conditions which were in themselves before the Cross; the ground was there for it. But just think: they had had an association with Him for three-and-a-half years, they had companied with Him during that time, they came under His influence and His spell, they heard all His teaching, they saw His works—they were His disciples; and yet, and yet, there was all that latent which made possible these divisions and suspicions and questions.

If our relationship to the Lord Jesus is something merely objective and outward: if it is a matter of knowing His teaching— of course believing that His teaching is right— and of having some measure of devotion to Him: all that kind of doctrinal, theological, historical relationship to the Lord Jesus, but falling short of something deep and drastic wrought inside; falling short of that tremendous action of the Cross to break the natural man and open up the way for something other from Heaven: then such conditions can and will obtain. In saying this I am saying more than my words perhaps convey. But very often that is the ground of all the scattering and the division and the quarrelling and the suspicion and the questions, and everything else. The Cross has not done its work to break the natural man—even in his relationship to Christ, in his apprehension of the things of Christ; to break all his natural life and so to speak split him wide open for something from Heaven. There is a long, long story bound up with a statement like that, and a terrible story. And so that is why I say that their disappointment and scattering was not just because Christ was crucified: it was because the seeds of that scattering were in them—the ground was already there.

But now what has happened? They have been broken and shattered, and now a new ground is being put in, the ground of another life and another kind of knowledge of the Lord. That is the great thing about the forty days. They have never known Him like this before. Indeed, they are finding it sometimes difficult to believe that this is He at all. “When they saw Him... some doubted”, (Matt. 28:17). “Is it He?” When He first met them coming from the tomb, He had to say: “Fear not...”, (v. 10). No, they were not sure yet. This is another kind of knowledge of Him; it is knowing Him on another ground. Paul said: “Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more”, (2 Cor. 5:16). In that way, no more! This is a different kind of knowledge of Him, as the essential basis of a true oneness: a knowledge which has come, on the one side, through a terrible shattering of all natural knowledge, and, on the other side, through a new coming of the Lord, personally, to those who have been shattered. It is always like that. Until we have been broken, we are not in a position for the Lord to come and show us the greatest things, the deepest things, the truest things. These are abiding principles.

And so He gathered them— or shall we say regathered them— and then, upon the basis of a new kind of life, upon a new kind of knowledge of Himself, He established among them an altogether new oneness. They are off the ground of their own life now; they are on the ground of His life. Their life was a divided life; His life is a uniting life. It is all very well for us to say that we are “all one in Christ” because we all share one life. Of course, that is true, but it might be quite a superficial statement. We really only come into the practical value of that one life if the Cross has done something in us. The practical expression of the oneness of that life demands this deep work of the Cross. That we are all one in Christ, because we share His one life, the eternal life that He has given, may be positionally true; but the expression of it may still be waiting.

Is that not true today? We can say that all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have received the gift of eternal life, are one—one by reason of the one life that they all share with Him and in Him. Yes, but look at the expression of it amongst Christians! Where is the manifestation of the oneness of that life? That is tragically lacking. With the disciples, the manifestation of it came about when the Cross had done its deep, breaking work in their natural life, and had turned them over on to another ground, where all their apprehension and knowledge of Him was a spiritual one. It was on the ground of something tremendous that was happening in them. These forty days were not only days of things happening to them: you could see something correspondingly happening in them all the time. Before, when He made the slightest allusion to or gave the least hint of His departure, they were thrown into consternation and terror. Now, they are moving rapidly toward the place where, far from feeling consternation that He is going from them, they are quite happy about it—even full of joy. All that fear has gone; it is all right now. As He appears, during these forty days, something is happening inside them.

### The New Scattering

There is another factor here that to me is of very great significance and comfort. You remember that it was not so very long after this that the persecution arose over Stephen, and they were all scattered once again (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19). They w

ere all scattered— and now it is perfectly safe for them to be scattered. The old scattering was a devastating thing: all loss, all weakness — all wrong. But they can be scattered anywhere, all over the world, now, and it is as safe as eternity. Once the thing is done inside, it is all right, it is all to the good. An Ethiopian no longer needs a Philip to lean upon: he can go his own way, rejoicing, without Philip or anybody else, when the thing is done inside. When that has happened, we can have every confidence that people will go on. Thank God that it is like that! There may be persecution, scattering, imprisonments, but they are going on.

These, then, and many others, are the values that sprang out of those forty days. But let us remember that this is here in the Word for us, it is handed down to us. It is not just history, Church history, of what happened long ago. This book of the Acts — which, as we have said, might very well be called "The Book of the Lord's Release" — is given to the Church as the very basis of the Church's life. It is for ourselves, and we have a tremendous heritage in these forty days. If only we were really established upon those values, what a difference it would make!

Let me emphasize once more that factor of the re-gathering and the consolidating in a new fellowship. That is what is needed. Is not the present deplorable situation amongst Christians, with all the fragments and divisions, all the questions and suspicions, and so on, a clear proof that believers are not really standing in the meaning of what has been done by the Cross, in destroying the natural ground and the natural life, and in making room for the spiritual and heavenly? That is where it all focuses. The deeper the Cross goes in us, in dealing with our natural life in all its forms, and the more we are open to the heavenly life, so the more we shall be drawn together and established. That is a statement of fact, but it is also a very real test of our own position.

I trust that I have said enough to show that these forty days were very, very important, and that they stand for all ages as a most significant epoch for the life of the Church.

#### **The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/18 16:48**

Chapter 5 - Ascension And Glorifying Of The Lord Jesus

“The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up, after that He had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom He had chosen.”, (Acts 1:1–2).

“We behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.”, (Hebrews 2:9).

“Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name.”, (Philippians 2:9).

We have not attached sufficient importance to the ascension. We make much of the birth of the Lord Jesus; a great deal is made of His resurrection; something is made of Pentecost: but the ascension, while mentioned, is given very little attention, almost passed over. Yet it has immense significance: it is, in fact, one of the major features in the scale of redemption's work. Drop it out, and the scale is not complete.

We have been speaking about the octave, the rising scale. Sound, as we know, is caused by vibrations in the air, but it is discerned by a wonderful mechanism in the ear. In the human ear there is a minute structure, like a little harp, which has no fewer than 10,000 chords. When a sound reaches it, a chord corresponding to that sound vibrates, and the vibration is transmitted to, and interpreted by, the brain, so that we are able to distinguish different sounds and recognize their origin. Now in the scale, or the octave, the higher we go, the more vibrations we get. There are only comparatively few vibrations on the lower notes. But the higher we go, the more vibrations there are, and the more alive and attune the ear needs to be. There are some sounds that are so high that the human ear cannot hear them.

My point is just this: that the higher we get in spiritual things, the more sensitive we have to be in order to discern. Perhaps the Lord had that in mind when He said: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”, (Matt. 11:15, etc.). There needs to be a corresponding response to what is being said. And when we come to the ascension, we are getting well up on the scale. Here is something of very great importance in the whole octave of redemption. It is a great turning-point, upon which everything revolves. We have to try now to answer in some small way the question: Why the ascension and glorifying?

The Disciples' Joy

It is surely one of the strongest arguments for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus that the disciples, and those who had been with Him during His earthly life, were so glad at last to let Him go. As we pointed out before, whenever He had referred to His coming departure, the idea of it had struck terror and consternation into their hearts. Indeed, those words of His recorded at the beginning of John 14 — “Let not your heart be troubled” — were uttered because of that very thing. He was speaking about His going, and they were filled with perplexity and dismay. If He went, they saw no hope, no future: everything for them simply disintegrated. They could not bear to think of His departure. How much of His time, in those last days with them, was occupied with this matter of His going, and with His efforts to allay their fears and to reassure them! They could not accept it. It was a dark shadow on their horizon.

But here, when it came to the actual departure, what a change! No sign of gloom whatsoever. He lifts up His hands and blesses them, and, as He does so, is received up into Heaven, out of their sight. There is no suggestion of terror, or even of loss. If we can rightly discern the atmosphere, that moment was anything but one of sadness. Something had happened to make them realize that all that He had said about it was true. This was no change for the worse, but a change for the infinitely better. They “returned to Jerusalem with great joy”, (Luke 24:52). Something has happened. I repeat: I think the fact that such a change should take place in them is one of the strongest arguments for the resurrection. And I feel that you and I, and all the Lord’s people today, need to catch something of that which was in their hearts. We need to capture something of that joy — that the Lord has “gone up” (Ps. 47:5)! We have not lost Him; rather by His going up to the Father have we greatly gained. Our gain in His going up is something upon which to dwell.

### A New Beginning

Let us come to our question again: Why the Ascension and Glorifying? To begin with, it was a turning - point in the dispensation; it marked a new beginning of things. We catch a glimpse of what was happening from some of the Psalms. Psalm 22: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”; Psalm 24 (which is surely a prophetic psalm): “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in.”, (v. 7; A.S.V.). It is all of a piece. And if that Psalm 24 begins, as it does: “The earth is the Lord’s...”, and continues: “Who shall ascend in to the hill of the Lord?” (v. 3), we look back for the answer to Psalm 23. It is the Shepherd of the sheep — such a Shepherd — Who will “dwell in the house of the Lord for ever”, (v. 6). It is He Who ascends into the hill of the Lord, Who has “clean hands and a pure heart, not having lifted up His soul unto vanity”, (24:4). This is He. And now the “everlasting doors” are waiting for Him.

So we can catch the picture. It is as though Heaven is in suspense, and earth is silent. There is a pause. Psalm 22 has all been enacted — the awful Cross, the terrible forsakenness, the desolation. He has been laid in the tomb. And now God has raised Him from the dead. But Heaven is waiting for something. And then the cry goes up: He is coming! The angels and the heavenly hosts break forth: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in”. “He is on the way, He is coming: open the gates for Him!” It is the picture of His ascension, His exaltation, of His return to Heaven. The point is that everything was waiting for that. Nothing more could happen until that took place. Yes, the preparation has been made down there on the earth; all that work has been done by the Cross; everything is ready. But in Heaven the mood is: “We are waiting — we cannot go on until He is back here, until He is in His place, His rightful place”. All waits for that. Everything is in suspense until that happens. This ascension, this exaltation, this glorifying of the Lord Jesus is something momentous. It must therefore have some very great meaning for us.

### Everything Now Centred In Heaven

I was saying that it is a new beginning, for which all the preparation has been made in the Cross. What is the new beginning? Well, a tremendous change has taken place in the character, the nature of the dispensation. In the old dispensation, under the old covenant, everything was centred in a spot on this earth and in a nation amongst the nations: Jerusalem the focal point, Palestine the country, the Jews the nation. All centred there; it focused upon something earthly, something temporal and something transient — something, indeed, that was capable of completely breaking down, as it has done. Now the whole thing is taken away from the earth, and the focal point of everything is in Heaven. Heaven holds the centre of all Divine interests, the source of, and resources for, all Divine activities. Heaven is the place now — for He Himself is there! The new dispensation is marked by this: but oh, that the Church had neither forgotten it, nor failed to see it! The centre, the headquarters, the seat of government is now in Heaven, beyond the reach and the touch of time and earth and change and the possibility of breakdown! Are we too familiar with the teaching to be reminded that the Church is now a heavenly people and not an earthly, and that all our spiritual blessings are in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3)? But that does have some very valuable practical meanings.

Consider this about the Lord Jesus, for instance. When He was here on this earth, He was, in a manner of speaking, at the mercy of men and things; He was governed very largely by earthly conditions. Men could treat Him as they would— and they did. It is a truly amazing thing, is it not, that they should have treated God incarnate as they did? And at length they ushered Him to His death. That is how they treated Him, how they handled Him— speaking from the standpoint of the world and men. But no one can do that now: no one can touch Him now, no one can in any way handle Him now. He is right above all such conditions and possibilities. Does it not bring tremendous rest, satisfaction, comfort to our hearts to know that? He is outside the reach of all these things that are against Him. He is beyond the touch of all the antagonistic forces set upon His destruction. He is right above them all, above all rule and authority and principality and power (Eph. 1:21), absolutely safe, and we need never have one moment's fear for Him, never have a moment's unrest.

#### The True Church Now With Christ In Heaven

Why am I saying that? Because it is of very great practical application and value. For the Church is a heavenly body, seated with Him (Eph. 2:6). We therefore need have no moment's worry about the true Church. Come down to the earth and see how men worry about their "church", and their churches, and their "things". They have got to look after the "thing": they have got to take care of it, they have got to keep it. They are the custodians of this thing, and they watch jealously and fiercely over it. What a lot of worry they have, and what a lot of trouble— just because it is something on the earth that has got to be looked after. What a grand thing it is, then, to be in the realm of the heavenly Church, where there is no need to worry about trying to preserve something and keep it going and see that it does not pass out! There is nothing of that at all about a work that is a heavenly work, that is united with Christ in Heaven. There is all the difference when you are on heavenly ground. You need not worry or fret to try and keep the thing going, lest it should break down, and you would be left without your "pet", without the thing for which you spent all your time and your resources. A heavenly thing is in the custodianship of One Who—thank God— is above all these things, and at rest.

This is what the Lord said: "In My Father's house are many resting-places... I go to prepare a place for you", (John 14:2). When you get on to heavenly ground you come to rest, just as He has come to rest. You need not to worry— only keep on that ground. If you are going to worry at all— if you must worry— worry lest you get down on to earthly ground, for that is the realm of worry. Keep above. Heavenly things are in safe keeping—in the keeping of the One Who is "far above all".

But it means more than that. "Every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", and we seated there with Him. That heavenly union with Christ means such abundance, such fulness, that we need never worry about spiritual supplies. It is just marvellous what resources, what supplies will come, if only we get on to the right ground, into the right position. If you are spiritually down on this earth (a contradiction in terms!), you will have to worry over your supplies. If you are down on the natural level of ministry, just see how hard you have got to work in order to get something to pass on. But get up into the open heaven, on to heavenly ground, and every spiritual blessing, abundance, fulness, follows. These are no abstract things; these are realities. It is one of the miracles of heavenly sustenance— the never - ending supplies all the way along. You feel you have come to the end, and there is nothing more, and then there comes another fulness; and again you seem to have exhausted everything, you have not got another crumb— and yet another fulness is forthcoming. Every time He wants it and there is a need for it, it is like that. And so you go on through the years.

This is all a part of His being in Heaven and the Church being joined with Him in Heaven. This is a part of the answer to the question: Why the ascension and the glorification of our Lord Jesus?

#### God's Attestation To A Heavenly Victory

But further, His ascension and His glorifying are God's own attestation of His Person and work. That is what the Scriptures say. That is the meaning of such passages as: "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He That descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man, Which is in heaven", (John 3:13). This is the attestation of His Person. We have noticed Psalm 24 as following Psalm 22. Psalm 24 is the attestation of the One Who in Psalm 22 cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Heaven breaks forth in attesting that One and His work in the Cross. At the beginning of this chapter we read Philippians 2:9: "Wherefore"— through "obedience unto death, the death of the Cross"— "God highly exalted Him". That is the attestation of Him and His work. The same is true of the passage that we read from Hebrews 2:9: "We behold Him... because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour". His exaltation and His glorification proclaim His victory. "Who is this King of glory?" "The Lord mighty in battle", (Ps. 24:10,8). He enters in, He proclaims His victory.

Now, although we may be familiar with this, and it may be no new information to us, it is very necessary for us always to

keep in mind that the real conflict and the real victory was in the heavenlies. The conflict was not with flesh and blood, it was not with Jewish rulers and leaders, it was not with Roman officials, or with the Roman Empire itself. Behind all these things was another, a spiritual empire, unseen, but very, very real, and we know it. It was in that realm that the real conflict took place. It was the encounter between two spiritual kingdoms and empires, and it was there that the real victory was won. It was a victory over those "principalities and powers and world-rulers of this darkness and hosts of wicked spirits". He went behind this outward world-system and dealt with everything lying behind what is here; it was in that realm that He established His victory.

It is true that difficulties arise in our minds when we see things going badly — a James killed, a Stephen martyred, thousands cast into the Roman arena and butchered; when, as today, we see countless homes and families broken up, and servants and people of God cast into prison. It is not difficult to wonder — Is He on the throne? Is it true that He is over all? But this Kingdom of His is a "long-term" thing, if we may use the expression. Perhaps you have watched a race of track runners in which there is one outstanding famous athlete. They start off on the race, and he seems to be the most in different of them all. He lets them all get ahead of him, and as they pass him there is not the slightest trace of anxiety on his face. He lets them get on with it. Everybody thinks that they are winning and he is beaten. But — wait until the end. He has such a store of energy that, at the last minute, when they are all spent, he calls upon his reserves and takes the race quite easily. It is the tremendous victory of competence and reserve.

The Lord Jesus is like that. That is exactly what is happening today. It looks as though His rival is having it his way, is getting ahead, and it does not seem that the Lord is very worried about it. We can discover no trace of anxiety or fret or feverish concern in the Lord. It is not that He is indifferent, but He knows what His reserves are — He knows what He can do. And again and again it has proved like that. In the end He has come in first — He has taken the race. He did it over the Roman Empire at the beginning, and He has done it repeatedly since. He has just let the enemy get ahead, seeming to have it all his own way, and then in the end, with His infinite reserves and competence, He has got it in His hand — He has collected all the prizes.

#### The Assurance Of Final Victory

It is like that for the Church. We may feel today that the enemy is having things a good deal his own way. It seems some times as though the Lord is a long way behind the enemy. But wait! He said to His disciples, as the last word: "I am with you... unto the consummation of the age", (Matt. 28:20): "I will be there at the end". The Lord Jesus will not be out of it at the end, He will be there. It will be the enemy who will be out.

In a day such as ours, I think that we need to gather something of the strength and consolation and help of this. We could easily be oppressed. A few years ago we heard, from the Far East, of the arrest and imprisonment all over the country of over a thousand brothers and sisters and leading workers, who had so faithfully and fully served the Lord for many years. We may not be having the same story of actual physical suffering and imprisonment, but we are in the same battle, and the spiritual pressure is terrible. The atmosphere is just full of antagonism. We need help, encouragement. And from where can we derive that help, more than from the fact that He, the Lord, has gone up on high, and is there on the throne?

That is only the first thing about it, but it is a mighty thing. This is presented to us in the record, out of the so manifest effect that it had upon those who were there. And we must remember that Luke was a very meticulous historian. He tells us that he took pains to look into and gather the data correctly, accurately. Luke would never have put this in his record if he had had any question or doubt about it. He had plenty of evidence for everything that he wrote in his book of the Acts. Here you have these men, under circumstances and conditions which would naturally have resulted in something so much the opposite, just like this — triumphant, positively triumphant! Their Lord has gone from them, He has been received up in a cloud out of their sight. He has gone: what ought they to feel like? But they are not in sorrow. They go triumphing, and to triumph, because He has gone up!

The exaltation of the Lord Jesus is here presented to our faith as a great note in the octave of redemption. The knowledge that the Lord is up there is intended to redeem us from fear and uncertainty, to redeem us from overwhelming depression and oppression in the day of apparent calamity. It is as though the Holy Spirit would seek to say, if not in words, in effect, in those who are thus suffering: "It is all right — He is on the throne! Jesus reigns — He is on the throne — He has gone up on high!" I believe they will come through because of this truth. It is a great factor in redemption.

#### A Representative Man Has Reached The Goal

But I said it is only one part of the great truth. There is another large part which can only be hinted at at this time. "What... if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" (John 6:62). "The Son of Man ascending..." That very title is indicative of a great and wonderful truth. It brings us right into the Letter to the Hebrews. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him? Thou... didst set Him over the works of Thy hands: Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet... But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him." (Heb. 2:6-8). Man has not yet come to that for which he was made; it is not all realized yet. "But we behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." (v. 9). What does it all mean?

Here is the Son of Man, in Whom, as a First One, is realized all the Divine intention concerning man, His very creation. It would be profitable at this point to enter upon a detailed study of the Hebrew letter, especially in its first chapters. "For not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we are speaking. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man...?" (2:5-6). The subjecting to man of the future inhabited earth is what is in view. We do not yet see all things in subjection under man; but we see his Representative in Heaven, with all things in subjection under Him, for man. It is secured for man in the representative Man in Heaven.

The writer continues: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partners of the heavenly calling ...", (3:1). It is all of a piece, you see. The "heavenly calling" — what is it? To be in fellowship with Him, in partnership with Him — "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of One: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren..." (2:11-12). "Wherefore, holy brethren, partners with Him and with one another in the heavenly calling..." What is it? To have dominion over the inhabited earth to come. He is there, having secured that purpose of God in His Own Person, representing the people, the "many sons" whom He is "bringing to glory", (2:10). That is why He has "ascended up on high", (Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:8). It signifies a Man installed, in full possession of the eternal intention of God concerning man; installed there as a First One of the many sons being brought to glory.

Perhaps you ask: What is the difference between the heavenly rule and government now, and that in the old dispensation? For the heavens did rule then. In the days of Daniel the heavens were ruling (Dan. 4:26; cf. vv. 17,25,32). Yes, they were ruling in the old dispensation. But what is the difference? That question throws open an immense door, and this whole Letter to the Hebrews will answer it. It is the great difference between a purely earthly and temporal dispensation, and one that is eternal and heavenly and spiritual. It comprises all the differences that are mentioned in this very letter — the letter of the "better" things. In the heavenly government of the Son of Man you come into something so much better than the general sovereignty of God in the old dispensation. That is far too big a matter for us to consider here, but it all centres in the question of why He is there in the glory — why He has gone up, why He has ascended and is glorified. It implies some very great and challenging things that Jesus is in Heaven.

### Practical Testing

Now let me close with this. It is one thing for us to know the truth about the Church being a heavenly body, a heavenly people; to know what the Word says about being "seated together with Him in the heavenlies", and being "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies"; perhaps even to be able to give Bible readings on it; and a very, very different thing to be in the good of it! Remember that it is a law throughout the Bible that you are always tested right up to the hilt, to the last degree, on every position that you take. Your testing corresponds to the position that you have taken and declared. So that, if you say, "I take my heavenly position", you are going to be tested right up to the hilt on your heavenly position. You will have nothing down here on this earth to support you; you will have to get all your support from Heaven. You will have nothing here to protect you; you will have to get all your protection from Heaven. You will have nothing here to champion you; you will have to get all your championing from Heaven. You will be tested on your position. But, praise God, that position is an eternal, impregnable one. It is a position that can stand the test.

This whole matter is very searching. The disciples came into the joy of it at the beginning, and much of that joy remained throughout; but it is clear that sometimes they had a real battle on this question. They had to fight to hold that ground — the ground that Jesus is Lord. Conditions demanded a very strong affirmation of it, a digging of the heels in and saying, in spite of everything: "He is Lord!" This is no romantic kind of thing — this is desperate. So the Apostle says: "Stand ... withstand... having done all, stand!" Where? "Our wrestling" is "in the heavenlies": stand there with Him!

**Re: The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/21 6:27**

Chapter 6 - The Advent Of The Holy Spirit

As we come to the sixth note in the octave, which is the advent of the Holy Spirit, we approach the matter, as before, with the question: Why the Holy Spirit? We know, of course, that the advent of the Holy Spirit inaugurated a new dispensation here on this earth. It is for us, therefore, as Christians of this dispensation, to know just what that implied, and what it is that particularly and peculiarly obtains in the dispensation in which we live.

Of course, when we use that word "dispensation", we are using a word that means more than just a time period, although that is the way in which it is generally and commonly used. We think of a dispensation as bounded by certain events and dates, and running from one particular point in time to another. But while the word means that, it means more than that. The word itself means literally "the running of a household", or "the job of a steward", and hence "stewardship"; and thus it comes to mean the order or nature of things obtaining at a certain period—what we mean by the word "economy". It is, in fact, the same word in the original as "economy": that is, how things are done, what is done, what are the principles governing the things that are done, in any given time.

I repeat therefore: it is most important that the Christian should know what is peculiar to this period in the history of the world, in the matter of what is done and how it is done, and the principles governing the "what" and the "how". For you and I—let us bring this very near home—are people of this particular economy. Failure to recognize that has led, and will lead, to much confusion and weakness. We must know what are the particular features of that dispensation, or economy, of God which was inaugurated on the day which we call the Day of Pentecost. Of course, Pentecost only means "fiftieth"—the feast of the two wave-loaves being held on the fiftieth day after the feast of first-fruits (Lev. 23:10, 15–17). The "day of Pentecost" was one of very many such "fiftieth days", but, being the most outstanding and most wonderful of them all, it is marked out and thought of by us as the only Pentecost. However, something happened then which changed the whole economy of God in the government of this world. What that was, it is for you and me to understand, and to understand very clearly.

It was not merely that on that day the Holy Spirit took over the government of things. That was not so. The Holy Spirit had always been in charge of things. He was in charge at the creation: "The Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters", (Gen. 1:2); and all the way through the old dispensation the Holy Spirit was active. He was there, not only in types and symbols and figures, but oft-times in actual power and wisdom, endowing men. He was there, superintending, all the way. What we have to understand is not just that He took over on the day of Pentecost, but that He took over on an altogether new basis. A very big change in the basis of operation by the Holy Spirit took place on that day.

Perhaps the most helpful way of presenting this fact is by drawing attention, first of all, to the sequence of events in this octave of redemption. The advent of the Holy Spirit is but a part of the whole, a part of redemption, but it is a very important note in the octave. As we follow through these stages, these phases, of the octave, it will help us to understand each successive movement in the scale if we can recognize the follow-on, the sequence in it all.

(1) The Incarnation

Let us look over it. The first note, or phase, of the octave, was the Incarnation of the Son of God: God's Son coming in human form into this world. You will remember that we tried to explain that there was a three-fold object in the Incarnation—it had three quite definite meanings. Firstly, the redemption of man: we saw something of the nature of man, from what it was that man had to be redeemed; secondly, the re-constituting of man according to God's original pattern; and, thirdly, the perfecting of man. Those three things were taken up by the Son of God, under the title of the "Son of Man", and in Himself personally they were made true. He was not only the Redeemer, but He was Himself the Redemption. Redemption became personal. It was not only what He did, but what He was as the Pattern of redeemed man. Is it necessary for me to safeguard what I am saying? Let me repeat that. Jesus was not only the Redeemer, and Redemption was not only what He did: He stood there as the personal embodiment and representation of redemption; He was the representation of redeemed man, of the kind of man that would emerge when redeemed.

He, then, was a Man as re-constituted according to God's mind; Man, in representation, re-constituted and different. And in Himself He was "made perfect through sufferings", (Heb. 2:10). He represented man perfected through sufferings and trials: not, of course, in the sense of being made good or sinless, but brought to completion. We must always remember that the word "perfect" in the Bible does not just mean a state: it means a measure, a maturity, a completeness, an "all-round-ness", a "finalization" or final realization of something. In Him the perfecting was not making Him better—nothing could do that—but it could, as Man, increase Him. And He did increase. We noticed that it was said twice over about His early years, first up to the age of twelve, and again afterwards, that He "grew in wisdom and stature", that "the gra



ce of God was upon Him", and that He was "in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:40,52). He was growing. And then, as for the three-and-a-half years, what an enlargement of patience, enlargement of faith, enlargement of love. He was the Man perfected, made perfect through suffering; that is, He was made complete. That is the Incarnation.

## (2) The Earthly Life

Then we considered His earthly life. As we watched Him through the thirty years, and then the three-and-a-half, we summed it all up by saying: Here is the kind of man that God is after. Under every test and trial, in all circumstances of adversity, He is presented to us as the kind of man that God intends to have — a true humanity: not, as we said, a "theophany", a mere transient visitation of God in man-form, but living from infancy through into maturity of life as a man, and standing there as One approved of God, of Whom God could say: "In Him I am well pleased", (Matt. 3:17, 17:5): satisfying God as a Man. In the earthly life there is presented to us, set before us, the Man that God intends to have, the Man that God is after.

If only we had eyes to see, and understanding to grasp, all that He was in Himself, and all those laws and principles by which He was governed! How different He was from every other man — utterly different, a mystery to all. "In the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not", (John 1:26; A.S.V.). It was not only that He was the Divine Son of God manifest in the flesh. It was proved true again and again that even as Man they could not fathom Him. The most intimate friends misunderstood, or failed to understand. There is something about Him as a Man that is different and inexplicable. But He is the kind of man that God is going to have.

I should perhaps say here, in parenthesis, that, in a measure — it may be a small measure, but a very real measure — that is, or should be, true of every Christian. The world knows us not because it knew Him not (John 1:10, 16:3; 1 John 3:1b). There ought to be about a true Christian something that the world cannot fathom, something which it is no use trying to make the world understand, for it never will. There is something different. We have no need to try to be different and singular and odd, for we shall certainly be that, if we go on with the Lord!

## (3) The Cross

Then we came to the Cross, and in the Cross we saw three things. We saw, firstly, one man, one kind of man, exposed. The Cross of the Lord Jesus was a terrible exposure, uncovering, of man as he is. If ever man divulged what he is like, showed what he is and can do, he did it then. If ever it was made manifest that man is really actuated and driven by the Devil himself, who has a foothold in him and only needs occasion for it to be revealed, it was done then. Don't let us think: "Oh, they were very terrible people! We are quite different from those people; we would never do that". Wait until we are put to the test. There is nothing — nothing — of which we are not capable, if only the circumstances are such as to uncover the depths of sin that exist in our natures, and draw us out. Yes, man was exposed in the Cross.

Secondly, we saw man classified: man shown what he is and where he belongs, put into his right category. Is it not true in our own case, as Christians, that, as we come, under the light of the Holy Spirit, really to understand something of our own hearts, in some measure to know ourselves — is it not true that we know where we belong? But for the mercy and grace of God, we know where we should be in the end — we should go to "our own place", where we belong. The Cross classified man and showed where he belonged.

Thirdly, the Cross put all under judgment and death, for "all have sinned". One man exposed, one man classified, one man judged and put away — that is the Cross.

## (4) The Resurrection

The Resurrection speaks of another Man brought in and attested. In the words of the Apostle Paul: "Jesus Christ... was declared", or "marked out as", "the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.", (Rom. 1:1,4). That sums it all up. The resurrection was God's attestation of the Man Who — far from being put away — is brought in in the place of the man that has been rejected.

## (5) The Ascension

The ascension and glorifying is all gathered up in this: the installation of the new Man, representatively, as the first of the sons being brought to glory; the new Man installed in Heaven.

## The Spirit Came To Make These Things True In Believers

With this brief reminder of the first five steps in the octave, we come to the advent of the Holy Spirit. You notice that each step must follow on the preceding, each is a part of the other. The advent of the Holy Spirit was to take up all those things that had preceded, to bring them down from the glorified Lord in Heaven, and to make them good in you and in me. The Holy Spirit came to make effectual in you and me the redemption for which Christ came — "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus", (Rom. 3:24) — the re-constitution of man that is set forth in Christ. He came to take up that work which was perfected in Him, and carry it to perfection in us — to perfect us also, to make us complete with the completeness of Christ.

So that the basis of the Holy Spirit's operation is nothing less than all the meaning of the Incarnation, in those respects.

As to the earthly life, here is the Man, the kind of man that God is after, and the Holy Spirit has come to conform us to that kind of man, to the image of God's Son: in a word, to make us Christ-like. That is the Holy Spirit's work; that is the thing for which He has come. That is a glorious hope for us.

As to the Cross — yes, it is equally true that the Holy Spirit's activity is constantly to bear witness against that man that has been put away. If you and I are really indwelt and governed by the Holy Spirit, we shall know when we touch that man. We shall know that that is prohibited ground; we shall know that there is a notice up there: "No Trespassing — Keep Off!" . Any Christian who does not know by a sting and a kick-back when he or she touches the old man, is lacking in sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit. But there is the other side. The Holy Spirit is to keep us on the positive side by saying: "Now this is the way, the way of life. Keep off that old ground — keep on the ground of life!" Dear Christian, do take this to heart: do finish with that old man! Do not be constantly digging him up and looking at him, going over him and round him, trying to find something good in him — that is, in yourself; for you never will! The verdict of God is that in him there is "no good thing", (Rom. 7:18); so keep off that ground, and keep on the ground of the new man. The old man has been exposed: surely you know by this time how bad he is. Why have anything to do with him?

The Holy Spirit has come to make us know that there is another ground upon which we must live our lives. He has come to carry into effect the work of the Cross, the putting aside of one, and the bringing in of another: in other words, to make way for the resurrection. You and I are now by the Holy Spirit called to live upon the ground of His resurrection, by resurrection life. Resurrection is the great feature of this dispensation. These are twin truths — the putting aside of one in order to make way for the other. And the Holy Spirit has come to work on that ground.

Finally, all this is gathered up in the Man in the glory. He is the embodiment of all these Divine things. He is installed there beyond any earthly risks, beyond any possibility of interference from down here. He is out of reach of any kind of touch from this world that would seek to alter things. He is right above it all. And then the Spirit comes to take up all this that is embodied in Him, and to work it out in us and in the Church.

That, then, is the answer to the question: Why the Holy Spirit? To make good the meaning of the Incarnation, so far as that Incarnation relates to mankind; to make good the meaning of the earthly life; to make good the meaning of the Cross; to make good the meaning of the Resurrection; to make good the meaning of the Ascension and Glorification of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit takes up all these things, with the object of bringing them to realization in believers.

## The Holy Spirit Is Committed To The Lord Jesus

Thus the Holy Spirit is wholly committed to the Lord Jesus. He has one all-inclusive, all-embracing concern: He is focused with all His attention and all His resources upon the Lord Jesus, to make Him glorious, and that in believers. As we know, the Lord Jesus said: "He shall glorify Me", (John 16:14). That is His work. Perhaps it is too familiar a thing to create any kind of stir, but I find a good deal of comfort to my heart from every fresh contemplation of the fact that the great advent of the Holy Spirit was centred upon and summed up in this one thing: the making good in you and in me — that is, in the Church — of all that the Lord Jesus was and has done as Son of Man. That gives a ground of confidence in prayer, a ground of assurance of hope. That is how the Holy Spirit has taken over in this dispensation.

This was the very burden of our Lord during those last very full days with His disciples. He stopped His public ministry, withdrew from the multitudes, and for many hours before the end gave Himself with concentrated attention to His disciples. And if you look at those final days and hours, so tightly packed with this instruction, this teaching, this unburdening of His heart, you will find that His burden at that time all related to the day that was coming. "In that day..." , "In that day..." , He was saying; and "that" day was the day of the Holy Spirit. "When He is come..." ; "In that day, when He is come..." H

He put the greatest importance and value upon the coming of the Holy Spirit, because He knew very well that all that He had come for, as in Incarnation and earthly life and Cross, would be without value unless the Holy Spirit reproduced it organically and vitally in other people.

He gathered that up into one so familiar statement: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit", (John 12:24). Now He said that in response to certain people who had expressed a wish to "see Jesus" (v. 21). It was a strange, mysterious rejoinder. "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified... Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone...". Surely His meaning was: "Though you ask, though you seek, ever so earnestly, you will never see the Son of Man glorified, only in His being reproduced in other people, like the corn reproducing itself. There you will see Me, there you will see My glory."

For there is a sense in which there is no seeing of the Son of Man, the glorious Son of Man, except in the Church, in believers. Alas! what a poor, poor showing we make of it! But that is His way. I say, He spent those hours and those days concentrating upon this thing. "For all that I have come to be and to do, the necessity is that the Holy Spirit shall come. It is far more important that He should come than that I should stay. If I stay, I am like the grain of wheat alone; if I go, I make room for Him to reproduce." He taught, therefore, that the only way to know Him, the only way to see Him, was this way.

#### Death - The Obstacle To God's Purpose, Has Been Removed

What effect ought that to have upon us? Surely, first of all, it ought to give us real exercise about the matter of the Holy Spirit having His rightful place in us, having no obstruction, being free to do His work. Let us remind ourselves that God, from His side, has moved to remove the greatest obstruction of all. When, in the Letter to the Hebrews, the Lord Jesus is presented as the Man installed in Heaven — "We behold... Jesus... crowned with glory and honour" (2:9) — it means that it is possible now for God to get on with His work in relation to mankind. God's thought is always concerning man. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him?", (2:6). Here is the Man to whom men are to be conformed: but there was a great obstruction, a great obstacle that made that impossible, and that was death. Death was in the way. Man can never come to that while the sentence of death rests upon everything. For when man sinned in his first father, death, the great enemy to all God's purpose, was passed as a sentence upon all men; and so it stands in the way. That man, that race can never come there and be like that.

But "we behold... Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour". He has taken the obstruction, the obstacle, and destroyed it. "Through death He brought to nought him that had the power of death, (Heb. 2:14). He has as "tasted death in the behalf of every man", (v. 9). He has taken up the great obstacle and put it out of the way. Now we can come to that likeness! From God's side, the greatest obstruction to the fulfilment of this Divine purpose has been removed — and if you deal with the greatest, you have dealt with everything — and so the way is open.

The effect of this upon us, then, ought to be that we see to it that we get off, and keep clear of, that ground of death — the death that rests upon the old man. This may sound mysterious, it may sound abstruse, but in fact it is very real, very practical. If you and I begin to have any truck with ourselves, as we are in ourselves, we know that death begins to work. It is always like that. And the enemy knows it too. If he can set in motion this "wheel of nature", (Jas. 3:6), get it stirred up and get us involved, he knows that he has us again under the power of death. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, and He works on, and only on, the ground of life. You and I, therefore, should make it our exercise to be always on the ground of life. We need to remember that God's thought for us is life, not death. If we will lay hold on life, God will react: the Holy Spirit will move. We accept death too easily. The enemy is always offering us death in some form or other and trying to get us to take it on. If we start flirting with death in any way, we just provide a playground for the Devil, and he will spoil everything. It is contrary to the Holy Spirit. May the Lord teach us what that means.

The Holy Spirit, then, is committed to the risen Christ, to the realizing in us of all that His risen life means, with the end in view of glorification.

#### Present Chastening Related To Future Government

There is in Christ a very full purpose concerning man, a very full purpose indeed. We said something about that from Hebrews in our last chapter. "Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands", (Ps. 8:6); "Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet", (Heb. 2:8). "The inhabited earth of which we are now speaking was subjected, not to angels, but to man", (Heb. 2:5). That is a tremendous calling, a tremendous vocation: nothing less than government of this world, in union with Christ, in the ages to come. Do you say: "That is a wonderful idea, a beautiful conception — but

what is the practical value of beautiful conceptions and ideas that are far off in the ages to come?" After this wonderful presentation that we have seen of Christ, and of man in relation to Christ, and of their fellowship or partnership in the government of the inhabited earth to come, there are two things that come out of this letter to the Hebrews.

One is that, in relation to that purpose, God is doing something in believers now. Do you remember Hebrews 12? "We have had fathers of our flesh, who chastened us as it seemed good to them for a season, and we gave them reverence: how much more to the Father of our spirits?", (vv. 9-10). The whole letter really heads up into this. With chapter 12 the writer is nearing the end of his message; he is summing up. What is it all about? "Holy brethren, partners in a heavenly calling..." (3:1). Government of the inhabited earth to come in union with Christ — that is our calling. But we have got to be trained for it; and what is happening to us now in our spiritual life is our training for that, and it is very practical.

If there is one thing that you and I find that we need to learn, it is how to get spiritual ascendancy. Why does the Lord allow all these things — these adverse things, these trying things? why does He not prevent them? It is in order that we may learn ascendancy of spirit: for this government is not official — it is spiritual government. The real government of this world is spiritual. Behind men and everything that is happening there is a spiritual system at work. But it is an evil thing. God is going to clear that out of His universe and put a good thing in its place. It is going to be a spiritual but heavenly government, and when there is a heavenly background to this world, what a different kind of world it will be. God is going to make this world a wholesome place by placing a wholesome spiritual government over it, and that government is going to be put in the hands of the saints.

But with that in view we are going through an awful gruelling, an awful schooling in the hands of the Father of our spirits. It is all over this matter of getting spiritual ascendancy. Every day we have something to get on top of, spiritually; something that must be put in subjection under our feet. Too often it gets on top and puts its feet on us. In order to bring it under, we have to co-operate with the Lord, and our training is so that we may learn how to bring it under our feet. The Holy Spirit is here for that. All those words about being "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man", (Eph. 3:16), "strong in the strength of the Lord" (cf. Eph. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:11) — all such words have to do with the matter of gaining spiritual ascendancy, getting on top.

#### Need For Encouragement And Warning

The other thing that comes out of this letter to the Hebrews is that so constantly struck note of exhortation, of encouragement. "Let us go on..." There is so much of warning and entreaty. Why? Because of this high calling, because of this great vocation, because of this very purpose in our new creation and union with God's Son. It is our inheritance — the inhabited earth to come and the government of it. We need much encouragement, we need much exhorting, we need constant warning; it is so big a thing. I believe it is that to which the writer refers when he says: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?", (2:3). The "so great salvation" is not just escaping hell and somehow scraping into Heaven — it is all this that is in this very letter. "Partners in a heavenly calling".

The Holy Spirit has come for the very purpose of making that good. Perhaps the names by which the Lord Jesus called Him do not impress us very much: for instance, when He calls Him, in our language, "the Comforter". Of course, that is very good: we need comforting; but that is only a part of the meaning of His Name. Its fuller meaning is: "the One called alongside", co-operating with us; "the Encourager", "the Advocate". He has come to be alongside — to be our Helper and Encourager in this great work of conformity to God's Son and fulfilment of eternal vocation in the ages to come.

#### The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/23 7:23

##### Chapter 7

##### The Church: Its Birth, Vocation And Completion

##### Why the Church?

The greatest concern or interest of God is His Son. The second greatest interest or object with God in this universe is the Church. And in the Scriptures those two are put together. Here is the statement:

"He... gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him That filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:23).

The Church is the "fulness" of Christ. If the Church needs Christ, Christ needs the Church.

##### What Is The Church?

We will seek to answer the question: "What is the Church?", in a few concise sentences.

Firstly, the Church is a particular body of people, chosen in Christ before the world was. That is precisely stated in Ephesians 1:4. There, it is stated that the Church, this particular body of people, was "chosen in Him". Just as definitely as Christ was chosen (Luke 9:35; cf. Ps. 89:19; Is. 42:1) and appointed (Heb. 1:2, 3:2), so was the Church.

Secondly, the Church is a body of people called out of the nations to be a heavenly people now: not hereafter in ages to come, but now. That is clearly implied in Acts 15:14: "God did visit... to take out... a people for His name "; and it is that to which our Lord referred, when He said: "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

Thirdly, the Church is a body of people who, although called individually, are not just so many individuals. They were never chosen individually, never chosen separately, but as a whole. It is very important to remember that. And as the work of the Holy Spirit is always to make real that which has been eternally determined and appointed by God, so it is His work— not as an afterthought, but according to plan— to make real and operative this eternal oneness in and with Christ: for that is the purpose of God.

#### Magnificence Of The Divine Conception

At this point I want to quote a passage from a book published several years ago which puts the matter in a very much better way than I can, and I reproduce it because it is not mine.

"It is essential to the right consideration of this subject (that is, the Church) that the magnificence of the New Testament concept of the Church be apprehended. In the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians the view of the Church which is Christ's Body is set forth. It is there seen as the ideal, invisible, indivisible, inviolable company of the redeemed of the present age. None but the truly regenerate have part therein; none, save the elect, partake of its blessedness. Failure and defection are unknown to it. Into it the pretender and the hypocrite cannot come. Breach or division it cannot know. Its unity is unbreakable; its calling and glory, heavenly; its relationship to Christ holy and intimate; and its destiny bound up in Him in splendour inconceivable. Through the centuries of our era, each marching generation but brings a contribution to it. While historically its members are being called, one by one, and incorporated into it, in its completeness and glory it is ever before the eye of God. Indeed, it has been in His heart from before all times. From their heavenly vantage points the angelic orders observe it, and are impressed and enlightened concerning the manifold wisdom of its Divine architect. Through the swift ebbing years of this age Christ Himself is its builder, adding stone to stone to this temple exceeding magnificent, Himself the while abiding that day when at last, complete, sanctified, beautiful, spotless and radiant with heavenly glory, it shall be presented to Himself and taken into the full enjoyment of an eternal association of blessedness, the features of which are at present undisclosed."

I am sure you agree that, on the one side, that is no exaggeration, and that, on the other side, it is a presentation of something that is of tremendous account to God, to Christ, and to ourselves.

Should you find difficulty with some of the assertions, you must remember that the whole statement is made from God's and from Heaven's standpoint, not from ours. That is how He sees it, eternally. What He may be seeing as to the present condition of things down here may be another matter; but that is God's eternal conception, and that is how God will eternally have it. It will be like that. And, eventually, it will prove to have been like that. It may be difficult for us to see; nevertheless, if we could see from God's standpoint, we should see that every sentence of that statement is true.

#### Evidence From The Opposition

Let us suspend our difficulties for a little while and go on. The Church is a definite object, or entity. It is not just an abstract idea— it is not an imaginary thing. It is a reality— not only in the mind of God, but, when it is seen according to its true constitution, and not man's constitution, a reality in its actual existence also. The Church is of immense value and importance to God and to Christ. As we have read, it is declared to be His "fulness". All the greater values of Christ—His fulness—are for the Church, in the Church, and through the Church. We have the statement of God's Word about it, and we have the history of the Church— in its continuance, its persistence, its very survival— to bear it out. And if we need more evidence as to its importance and its value, we can always get it from a certain quarter, which evinces a very irreligious solicitude for God's interests. Satan hates the Church, as he hates Christ. He has given more trouble over the Church than over anything else.

I want to give one more quotation from the book, and I am very glad that I am not saying this at first-hand.

"All through the Christian age a minority of believers has endeavoured to carry out in corporate life these scriptural principles. The bitterest and most implacable opposition has come to them, not from the world, but from organized Christendom, that is, the system that men call the Church. By this powerful organization they have been in turn oppressed, misrepresented, persecuted, reviled, ridiculed, and ignored. But their persistence from century to century has supplied the proof of the practicability of these principles and of such a Church being in the will of God."

And a short extract from another book — this is about the Church:

"Against such a transcendent truth, affecting as it does the glory of God and the person of Christ, it is not a matter of surprise that the arch-adversary should set himself with his utmost might and his most persistent and ingenious devices, both by opposition and by imitation..."

Yes: if there is one thing, next to the Lord Jesus Himself, that Satan hates, it is the Church, and any true representation of it. I should like to spend some time on the matter of the representation of the Church — the necessity of it, the possibility of it, the nature of it — and we may come back to a closing word on that later.

#### Titles Or Pictures Of The Church

We are asking: Why the Church? I think the best way of answering that question is by a consideration of the various representations or pictures of it, the various titles given to it, in the Word of God. There are in the Word perhaps nine main titles or illustrations of the Church. There may be other subsidiary ones, but in the main there are nine. If we consider carefully these pictures or titles, we shall get very near to an answer to our question. Let us run through them with a few comments upon each.

##### (1) The House Of God

The first title given to the Church is the House of God. But here it is necessary for us to be clear as to our terms. When we speak of a house, we immediately think of a structure, a building. We pass along the street and we say, "That is a nice house", or "an ugly house", or "an unusual house"; that is how we use the word. It is necessary for us to understand that that is not the full meaning of the word as it is used in the connection "the House of God". We should be nearer the truth if we changed the word into 'household', because that is really the thought, it is inclusive of three ideas. One, the structure — God's building; two, the contents of the house — what is in it; three, the arrangement or order of the house — how the contents are set out, deployed; their place, their position, and so on. With this, of course, is closely associated the idea of government. The structure, contents, arrangement, order and government of the house: that is all contained in this expression, "the House of God."

First of all, the House of God is God's building, God's structure. "I will build My church". It is God's. Man does not make this, and it is impertinence to take hold of it and make it man's. The proprietorship of this building is vested solely in God Himself.

Then, what is in this House is there because God has put it there, nothing can have a place, as a "living stone", in the House of God, except as put there by God. You cannot "join" the House of God at your own choice. You may talk about "joining the Church", but that belongs to another realm of things altogether. In the New Testament "the Lord added to the Church them that were being saved" (Acts 2:47). The Lord added. Only those whom the Lord includes are in the House of God.

Thirdly, the order in the House of God is God's order. God is a God of order; Satan is the god of anarchy and lawlessness. God has an order for His House, and He is very particular about it. That is clear enough from the First Letter to the Corinthians. If we ignore that order, overlook it, set it aside, it will be to our own loss, our own detriment. We shall find that in our lives there will be frustration, limitation; God will not be setting His seal upon us. The Holy Spirit is the custodian of the Divine order, and so we shall come into that order if we are under the government of the Holy Spirit.

Our placing in the House of God is the prerogative of God by the Holy Spirit. The place that we occupy, the function that we perform, must be God-appointed. If we try to do what God has never called us to do, we shall be misfits in the House of God. But if, under the Holy Spirit's government, we are content with that for which the Lord has brought us into His House, we shall be at rest; it will be ease and not friction. God superintends His own House: it is His government, because

It is His House. And, as I said in the other connection, it is nothing other than impertinence to come into God's House and try to upset the order, or to impose our own order. We must ever seek to be subject to the Holy Spirit, and His order, in the House of God.

## (2) The Tabernacle And Temple

The second representation of the House is found in the Tabernacle and the Temple. They are identical in purpose. There are in the main two ideas connected with these designations.

Firstly, they are the place where God is, the place where God chooses to be. There is a place where God chooses to be and where He can be found, and, normally, that is in His Tabernacle, in His Temple — in the Church. The Church is supposed to be, intended to be, the place where you will find God, where God is. That is not a building; that is the people of God. He chooses a place for Himself. How much there is in the Old Testament illustrative of this (cf. Ps. 132:13–14). But His own Son's words are: "Where two or three are gathered together into My name, there am I" (Matt. 18:20), it is but the enunciation of an eternal principle. God chooses to locate or localize Himself: He chooses to be in a certain place, and there you find Him. How one is tempted to enlarge upon that! But if you, as a believer, as a Christian, detach yourself from the Lord's people, and go off on your own independent way, you will find yourself, before long, like Thomas — where the Lord is not. And, like Thomas, you will not find the Lord until you come back with the other disciples. God has chosen His Temple, His spiritual Temple, as the place where He will meet us, the place where He can be found.

And, when it is as it should be, when it is according to His mind, it is also the place where He speaks. I venture to go a step further, and say that the more closely the conditions in a company correspond to God's idea, God's thought for the Church, the more fully will you hear Him speak there. You will hear more from the Lord under such conditions than where there is a less close approximation to His conception of the Temple.

The second thought connected with the Tabernacle or Temple is that it is the place where God is worshipped. It is "holiness unto the Lord. God's spiritual House, however, is now no longer a structure, but a people, and so the Temple conveys the thought of a worshipping people. And what is worship? We have often defined worship as the drawing of everything Godward; everything directed toward the Lord. That is "holiness — or "wholeness" — unto the Lord", everything being for Him. That is how the Church should be; that is God's mind.

## (3) A Holy Nation

From Peter, we learn that the Church is a nation — "a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9, quoting from Ex. 19:6). Much light is thrown upon this in the Old Testament, as we know. As we said at the beginning, it is a people taken out of the nations for His Name, to be made, here and now, a heavenly nation, a nation of a different order — the very word "heavenly", of course, carries that with it — a heavenly nation out from the nations and yet in the midst of the nations. But there are three things to be noted in connection with this conception of the Church as a nation.

The first thing is the principle or law of separation. That is clearly illustrated and in force in the case of Israel, as the earthly type of this Church, separate from the nations. Israel lost its very integration, its vocation, its power, its glory — everything — when it lost that distinctiveness from the other nations, when it allowed a bridge to be built between it and them, and began worshipping their gods. It was because of its lost distinctiveness as a nation that Israel went into captivity. The Old Testament is a very powerful object-lesson of spiritual principles. If that is true in the temporal and earthly realm, how much more true must it be in the spiritual and the heavenly and the eternal! One thing that has accounted, perhaps more than anything else, for loss of glory, power, influence, and the presence of God, in the Church during the centuries, has been the infiltration of the world into it, and it getting into the world — a lost distinctiveness, a lost separation.

Moreover, the nation was constituted as well as a separated people. It certainly was separated — there was no doubt about its separation from Egypt! Pharaoh tried to parley on that matter; suggested that they should leave a little behind, a little attachment. "No", said the Lord through Moses, "not a single hoof of a single animal!" (Ex. 10:24–26). And then I look at the breach that God made, the gap that He put between Israel and Egypt. It is all very illustrative. But then, when He got them out, He constituted them a nation. They came out a multitude — we might almost say a rabble; and then God took them in hand to form and constitute them into an entity, with spiritual laws and principles governing every detail of their lives. They were brought right under the direct control of Heaven, where nothing of this world could meet their need. Their resources were all from above; they were a people constituted on heavenly principles, under heavenly government. And that is the Church!

Thirdly, Peter tells us, in this comprehensive statement, that the purpose of our calling is "to show forth the excellencies of Him Who called us" — of the One Who "called us out of darkness into His marvellous light". The vocation of the nation is to show forth His 'excellencies': in other words, to show how God excels, how He transcends. That was Israel's calling; and if that was true in a limited, earthly way, how much more true it is, in a heavenly, universal way, of the Church. To show forth His excellencies, how He excels: that is what He is seeking to do all the time. As we have often said, He allows the enemy to go a long way, to have a good deal of tether and leash, and then He shows just how much further He can go. He allows the enemy to do much, and then He shows how He can take hold of the much and turn it to His own glory.

The "excellencies of Him", shown in the Church and by the Church: this is something to dwell upon. Look at the Book of the Acts from that standpoint alone, and see the working out of what Paul said, many years afterwards: "I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.", (Phil. 1:12). Just think of the things which befell him — all falling out for the furtherance of the Gospel! That is one way in which His excellencies are shown forth. If angels are looking on, I am sure they are covering their faces and covering their feet in worship, as they see the grace of God in many a suffering servant and child of His — the excellencies of His grace.

#### (4) The Church

For our fourth designation, we come to the very word "Church" itself. This, as we know, represents the Greek word *ekklesia*, a very rich and full word that was appropriated by Christ and the apostles and applied to this eternally elect body, the Church. The modern equivalent of this word is our word "assembly", a word which carries in it all the elements of the meaning of the original Greek. In the Greek world, certain people were chosen, elected, to a position either upon the municipal council, or the provincial or national government, according as it was in a city, or in a province, or in a country, respectively. And at a given time, when there was business of state to be attended to, and a session was to be convened, the messengers went out to call the men together, to summon the assembly together in order to transact the business of the state or city. Such a body of men was called the *ekklesia*.

It was not a Church matter, an "ecclesiastical" matter, as we think of it; it was a purely political matter, whether of municipality, province, or state — the "Assembly". It embodied the idea of an elected company, brought together to transact the business of the kingdom. This is the word that was taken over and applied to the Church. How rich it is! An elect company, called together for the purpose of carrying on the work of the Kingdom! An elect company — "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world", (Eph. 1:4), "called into the fellowship of His Son", (1 Cor. 1:9), called "according to His eternal purpose", (Eph. 3:11): called together, and, with Him, entrusted with the affairs of His government. Would that we, as the Church, approximated to that more closely, more fully!

#### (5) The Body Of Christ

Next we come to "the Church which is His Body". We read about it in Ephesians 1:22–23, and there are, of course, a number of other references to the Church under that designation or title. What is the idea, or the function, of a physical body? First of all, the body of a man is a vehicle for the expression of his personality. Not always can you read the personality through the features and the body, but people usually give themselves away to some degree by their bodies. Even if, as in some cases, you find it difficult to read what is going on inside, the very fact that it is difficult to read tells you that they are not intending you to know — and you have read them! We cannot easily get away from the fact that, whether by gesture, by look, by expression, or in many other ways, we betray ourselves through our bodies. That, at any rate, is one purpose of a body, to be the expression of the man inside, to provide him with a means of expressing himself.

In the same way, "the Church which is His Body" is the vessel, the "embodiment", of the Lord the Spirit, in which and by which He is to express Himself. If the Church, as we met it and moved amongst its members, accorded with the Divine idea, we should know what the Lord was like. Let us take this to heart: that our very existence as the Church is in order that people may know what Christ is like. Alas, we fail Him so much in this. It is often so difficult to detect the real character of the Lord Jesus in His people. But that is the very first meaning of the Body of Christ.

But further — and here we are on familiar ground — a physical body is an organic whole. It is not something put together from the outside. It is something that is marked by a oneness, by reason of a life within; it is related and inter-related in every part, dependent and inter-dependent; every remotest part is affected by what happens in any other part. That could be much enlarged upon. But we have much more yet to learn as to the actual spiritual application of this reality about the Church as the Body of Christ. We need to be brought right into that great "sympathetic system" of the Body. And that



demands a real work of grace in us. There are many ways in which that is expressed in the Word. We are to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.", (Heb. 13:3); that is, we are to get into their situations by the Spirit. It is an organic whole. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it", (1 Cor. 12:26). It is probable that we suffer a good deal for things that we know nothing about. There is suffering going on, and we are involved in it: the Lord is seeking to involve us in the needs of others, to bring us into their conflict.

But, whether or not we apprehend this truth, whether or not we are alive to it and understand it, it is God's fact that it is so. Believers in one place are dependent upon believers in another place; they are affected. This is such a whole; there is one sympathetic nerve-system running through the whole body. If only you and I really became spiritually more alive, the expression of the Body would be much more perfect. Our deadness, our insensitiveness, our lack of real spiritual aliveness, results in there being more suffering, more loss, than there need be.

If only we could — not mechanically, and not by information, but on the principle of the Body — be moved into a universal sympathy and co-operation with the people of God! Our moving is so often mechanical; we have to read or hear letters, somehow receive information, in order to be stimulated to some measure of prayer. But I believe that, altogether apart from those means, if we were really in the Spirit, the Spirit would lay burdens for people on our hearts. Do you not think that it is a matter that we ought continually to bring before the Lord? "Lord, there is someone praying today for something: is it possible that I might be the answer to their prayer? If so, show me, lead me, lay it on me." That is spiritual relatedness, aliveness. The oneness of the Body is a great vocation.

#### (6) A Royal Priesthood

The sixth designation is found in Peter again: "a royal priesthood", (1 Pet. 2:9). He is again quoting from Exodus 19:6 — "a kingdom of priests". Notice the combination of the two ideas — king and priest, kingdom and priesthood: two functions brought together — the throne and the altar. What does it mean? Surely it means this: that it is by yielding, releasing, letting go, by self-emptying and suffering, that the Throne operates, that Divine power is exercised in this universe. It is suffering and glory, it is weakness and power — seeming contradictions in terms. But here it is in the Word: "in the midst of the throne... a Lamb", (Rev. 5:6). Here is the symbol of utmost yieldedness, and, in the right sense, of non-resistance, even to evil (I am not speaking of non-resistance, to sin, but to wrong suffered, injustice, unrighteousness): a Lamb led to the slaughter, and through the slaughter to the Throne (Is. 53:7; 52:13).

These are tremendous spiritual principles. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.", (Matt. 11:29). This is the King speaking: it is He into Whose hands has been committed "all authority in Heaven and in earth", (Matt. 28:18). See how He received the authority, how He reached the Throne! The Church is supposed to be like that: a kingly priesthood, on the one side involved in sacrifice and suffering, like the priest, and at the same time ruling and reigning on the Throne, as a king.

#### (7) One New Man

The seventh picture is "one new man", (Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:28). Jesus called Himself, and it was His favourite title, "the Son of Man". Of course, the "oneness" referred to by Paul is the result of different kinds of people having disappeared. There is no longer Jew and Gentile: as different kinds, as representatives of two racial orders of men, they have disappeared, they have gone out. They have vanished, and in their place there is "one new man". Taking up all that we said in the beginning about the meaning of the Incarnation, we must say that the Church is a different kind of entity, representing a different kind of manhood, of race, of mankind; of a different order, just as Christ was different.

With Him the difference was inward. Looking on Him from the outside, people did not discern the great difference. There may have been some features that were different from other men, but if so, they were not impressed by them. They could not see the difference between Him and other men. "Is not this the carpenter?", (Mark 6:3). They talked about Him as they would of other men, looking on Him from the outside. But He was different as a Man. The Man inside the body was a different Man, governed by different laws, different conceptions altogether, from those by which other people were governed; governed from a different realm, and so — in that sense — always a mystery.

Many years afterward, John said, in writing his letter: "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not", (1 John 3:1b). We, too, are another kind of being; and that ought to be, if I may put it this way, quite natural. The real secret, the real meaning is inward, is it not? Outwardly perhaps no different from other people — although there ought to be some traces outwardly; not self-conscious, not always trying to be another kind, no pose: just the fact — of which

we ourselves are the most unconscious — that there is something there that does not belong to this creation; something that speaks of another world, another order, another life, another nature. We just do not behave, under given circumstances, as others would behave. And the Church, composed of many individuals, is supposed to be like that — a "one new man".

#### (8) The Bride

The eighth title is that of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife". Here we must refer to quite a number of Scriptures, from Genesis, from Matthew and Mark, from Ephesians, from the Revelation. Almost the last word of the angel to the Apostle John was: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb", (Rev. 21:9b): almost synonymous terms, and yet not quite identical in sense. Let us first of all recall something of the beginning of that relationship. The first word concerning it came from God Himself: "It is not good that the man should be alone, (Gen. 2:18). The idea of this relationship, then, at the very beginning, was one of fellowship and companionship: the sublime idea of the relationship between Christ and His Church. "Christ... loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it", (Eph. 5:25; A.S.V.). God, so to speak, looked upon His Son, and said: "It is not good for Him to be alone." The Church — mystery of mysteries! — is supposed to be in that relationship to Christ: to be His companion, to have fellowship with Him, to have interchange of mind, of heart, to move together.

And then God said: "I will make him a help meet for him", (Gen. 2:18). "I will make him someone meet to help him, suitable to help him — a help-meet". A very simple idea; but transfer that to the Church. To minister to Christ, to take account of Christ's needs, Christ's desires, to have the whole poise in His direction. "How can I anticipate Him, His desires and His needs? how can I best serve His interests?" That, of course, is the Bible idea of a wife, but the Bible at least intends the earthly relationship to be a reflection of the heavenly — "even as Christ and the Church", (Eph. 5:25,29,32). The point is this: that you and I, if we are of the Church, are to have our poise entirely toward Him. How can we best serve Him, how can we be well-pleasing to Him? How can we anticipate Him in His needs and desires, and what will be to His interests? That is the very first idea bound up with the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

With that, of course, goes the idea of identity: "the twain shall become one flesh", (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16). They are one: not two now, but one — one flesh. Remember Ephesians 5 on that matter. Furthermore, the idea of the relationship is His increase. "Be fruitful and multiply...", (Gen. 1:28). "He shall see His seed... He shall see of the travail of His soul...", (Is. 53:10-11). How? There is no other way but by the Church. Let us note this: the travail of His soul is to be satisfied by the Church's bringing into being of new babes. It puts evangelism in a new light, does it not? It is for Him. It is not just the interest of getting souls saved: it is that He may see of the travail of His soul, that He may be satisfied. The Church is the vessel in which and through which Christ is reproduced — through which, can we say, He is propagated. And any 'church', so calling itself, that is not reproductive, to which the Lord is not adding, in which no spiritual births are taking place, has missed the point of its relationship to Christ.

#### (9) The City

The last picture is that of the City. At the end of the Revelation, we are told that the angel, after having said: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.", (21:9), carried the Apostle away "in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city...", (v. 10). These are not two separate entities. All these titles belong to the one entity, but they are the same entity viewed from different standpoints. If you study it, I think you will find that the title of 'the City' gathers into itself all the elements of the others; they all come together in this.

Note some of the features of this City. First of all, its greatness. What a great City it is! It sets forth the spiritual greatness of the Church in union with Christ. Look again at its strength — its "walls great and high" (v.12): what strength there is in this City! It is the spiritual strength of the Church in union with Christ. It has proved true that "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it", (Matt. 16:18). Hell has been moved from its depths, it has exhausted every resource against the Church; but the Church goes on — it is a mighty Church. Its strength is not the strength of men. Look again at its purity: "her light... as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal", (v. 11): everything transparent — its street transparent gold (v. 18), its river of crystal clear water (22:1) — the purity of the Church at last. Look again at its beauty: "all manner of precious stones" (v. 19). It is a beautiful city. Its gates of pearl (v. 21) speak of the sufferings and the sacrifice of fellowship with its Lord and in His afflictions. Look at its livingness (21:1-2), and look at its luminousness (21:11, 23-24; 22:5) — its life and its light. Look at its fulness of resource: the trees bearing their fruit all the year round (22:2). Constant reproduction without intermission — something altogether phenomenal and different. And, finally, everywhere the number twelve written large: twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve thousand stadia: all speaking of spiritual government.

Such is the presentation that we are given of the Church as it is to be when, at last, the work is done. Let us take note that it is presented to us as a fact. We might very well despair, now, that it could ever be realized, but we have been given this prophetic revelation of just what it will be like at the end. No matter how things are now it does matter, of course, how they are — but in a sense, no matter how things are, that is how it is going to be. To go back to the former simile: He will "present the church to Himself a glorious Church" — a holy Church, a pure Church, a sanctified Church "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, (Eph. 5:27; A.S.V.).

#### **The Octave of Redemption - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/10/26 6:47**

##### **Chapter 8**

##### **The Coming Again Of The Lord Jesus**

So we come to the last note of the octave of redemption: The Coming Again of the Lord Jesus. No attempt has been made to give a comprehensive presentation of any one of these aspects of redemption, but only to provide, if possible, a concise answer to the question asked about every one of them: Why this...? Why that...? That is particularly true of this last aspect. I shall not attempt for a moment to cover all the ground of the Lord's second coming.

Why, then, the Coming Again of the Lord Jesus? The coming of the Lord is most commonly thought of as an event; something that is going to happen at a given time, as an item in a programme; just an event that will one day take place. Of course, so far as it goes, that is true; but it is quite important that we should know why it should take place — why He will come again. Let us be clear that God could effect almost all the things associated with Christ's coming without His actual coming. For instance, if it is a matter of taking Christians to Heaven, He could do that without Christ coming to fetch us; and there are many other things like that that God could do directly and quite independently. But the Scriptures show us that they are all bound up with and centred in the personal coming of Christ, and it is that fact which gives point to the question. Why should it be like that? Why should it be a matter of Christ coming back again?

##### **The Consummation of Redemption**

The answer is really found in all that we have been saying in the foregoing studies. The coming again of the Lord is just His own consummation of all that. To the apostles, He said, as He went from them: "I am with you... unto the consummation of the age", (Matt. 28:20). "I am with you until the summing up of the age": that is the meaning of the words. Then what is it, in this age, that will be summed up at the end? It will be all that we have been saying about Him in these pages. Let us very hurriedly pass our eye over it, in order to see the summation in His coming.

The first and the final coming are clearly united in purpose and realization. The first stage of redemption with which we were occupied was the Incarnation of God's Son — His coming in man-form into this world; and we indicated that in that Incarnation there were three purposes. One, the redemption of man by Man. By man sin came: by Man sin must go. By man came the consequences: by Man those consequences must be destroyed and put away. This is the whole point of His becoming Man. Two, the redemption of man: the re-constituting of man, to make him the kind of man that God intended, but which he had so grievously ceased to be. Three, the perfecting of man for glory. Those were the three things bound up with His coming in man-form in the first instance.

The second phase was His earthly life. We summed this up by saying that, being here from birth and infancy, to full, mature manhood, through every trial and testing and fiery ordeal, right up to the last moment on the Cross when the fires were heated seven times, He presented to God a body without a mark of sin, or failure, or breakdown. "A body didst thou prepare for Me", He said (Heb. 10:5); and, having passed through every possible kind of trial, He presented it back to God, without any taint, without any loss of spiritual character. He presented it back to God, a whole burnt-offering (Heb. 9:14), acceptable, well-pleasing to God. He represented the Man that God is after, from beginning to end living a life that was absolutely triumphant over all that which humanity has to meet; and thus He became the pattern Man according to God's heart, the Man that God is after and is going to have.

##### **"The Earth Is The Lord's"**

There was something of very great meaning in the Son of God, as Son of Man, putting His feet upon this earth. In an earlier study, we quoted the 24th Psalm. You notice that it begins with: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof". That is the beginning of the first stanza. The second stanza begins (v. 3): "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" and the answer comes: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; Who hath not lifted up His soul unto vanity, and hath not sworn deceitfully." He — He is the One! Then the third stanza (v. 7): "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in.", (A.S.V.) Do you see the movement? The earth is the Lord's: and He has put His feet on the earth, He has actually stood on this earth. He has lived His life here without defiled

hands or heart, and therefore He, and He alone, is the One Who is fit to ascend into the hill of the Lord. Because He has come here and so lived and so triumphed, the everlasting doors are flung open: He can enter in.

Now the point is this. The earth is the Lord's, and He has put His feet down on this earth, and has said: "This earth belongs to this kind of Man, and Heaven will attest it!" That is the meaning of the 24th Psalm. And that is why, when He had lived the life, gained the victory, and risen triumphant, He said to His disciples: "Go into all the world: go and put your feet down in all the earth, and claim it. It is My inheritance, by right of creation, by right of redemption. You go and put your feet on it: it belongs to Me. That is all in the course of redemption."

The Cross was the making effective of that redemption that was the purpose of the Incarnation— making effective the redemption of that earth upon which He put His feet and lived His triumphant life. By His Cross He took the earth out of the hands of the prince of this world, and took it back into His own rightful possession. "Now", said He, "shall the prince of this world be cast out.", (John 12:31).

In the Resurrection He is in possession of that, and for forty days He is establishing the great fact that He is alive. He is alive! He "became dead": He is "alive for evermore": He has "the keys of death and of Hades", (Rev. 1:18): and He is establishing that in the nucleus of His Church, in their very being, for all time.

And then He goes to glory in their presence: and the whole thing— the Incarnation with its meaning, the life with its glorious triumph, the Cross with its wonderful destruction of the work of the Devil— the whole thing is taken and put beyond the reach of anything here, men or devil, to touch it or alter it. It is put in Heaven. You remember what He Himself says to us about Heaven: "where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal", (Matt. 6:20). It is beyond. "Your life is hid with Christ in God", (Col. 3:3). It is up there; nothing here can interfere with it. That is the Ascension.

The Spirit came as the Spirit of the glorified Christ in Heaven, sent forth to bring— potentially— all those values from Heaven to earth; to take up the work of making them good in believers for this dispensation.

The Church was born as the vessel, the "one new man". Let us be careful, in this connection, that we do not speak of the Church as being Christ incarnate again. The Spirit came to indwell the Church: to make the Church, as the Body of Christ, His counterpart, for expressing all the work that He Himself had done and taken to glory.

### The Second Coming

At last He is coming again! Why? To finish it all! To complete the redemption of man! To complete all that He came to do the first time, in every realm. The eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans deals with this consummation of redemption in two respects.

First, the manifestation, the revealing, of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). They have been secret, they have been hidden; only among the Persons of the Godhead is it known who are Christ's; but they are going to be revealed, disclosed. That is the consummation of redemption: the bringing out and manifesting of the sons of God; making them known, displaying them in glory. I always think that that is a very wonderful word of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians on this very point: "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed...", (2 Thess. 1:10). There here is the completion of the purpose of the Incarnation: redemption, reconstitution, perfecting, glorifying, all brought to fullness in His coming. "Marvelled at in all them that believed": that phrase always fascinates me. What does it mean? Surely, that all onlookers, all intelligences looking on, as they look at the saints, will say: "Look at them! Isn't He marvellous?!" "Marvelled at in all them that believe", "when He shall come". It is the consummation of the work and purpose of the Incarnation, and the consummation in believers of the whole meaning of His earthly life.

But then Romans 8 touches the other aspect of redemption. "The whole creation", we are told, is waiting for this "revealing of the sons of God", and "groaning and travailing in pain together" as it does so (v. 19,22). "The creation itself", says the Apostle, "shall be delivered...", (v. 21). He put His feet upon the earth and said: "It is Mine". He has come to this earth, lived on it and triumphed on it, and won the victory for it and over it; and now at His coming it is redeemed, as the consummation of redemption. "The creation itself" is "delivered from the bondage of corruption". But it is not only the creation that is to be delivered. Our bodies are to come into the benefit of this consummation of redemption. "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for... the redemption of our body", (v. 23). The physical bodies of believers are to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption".

All this is what He came to do. All that He wrought in Himself, all that was true of Him, He is now making good in believers. I know that these words apply primarily to His Deity, yet there is a secondary application of them: "It was not possible that He should be holden" of death (Acts 2:24); "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption", (v. 27). Because He was the Holy One, it was not possible that He should be held and kept down by death, for that is the penalty of sin. As I say, primarily that relates to Him as the Divine Son of God, incorruptible and sinless; but now He delivers believers from sin and corruption, and therefore from death, and makes good in them the thing that was true in Himself. He is not making them into Deity, but through grace He is conferring upon them all the values of His own triumph. And that includes physical redemption.

Do you see why the coming again? to make good all that He came for and all that He did at His first coming. And that is not all. In the Cross, while He was there dealing with the whole sin question — and in Himself He dealt with it fully and finally — He was, even more than that, dealing with the whole Satan question. We have sought to emphasize the fact that the real battle of the Cross was in that cosmic realm of principalities and powers. That is where the real battle went on; and it was a terrific battle, with every evil, sinister, dark thing of the kingdom of Satan. And it was there that the full triumph of the Lord Jesus was won. His coming again is to make that triumph absolute, final; to bring the Church into the glory of His triumph.

We are in the battle; and it is very true that, the more you stand on the ground of Calvary, of the Cross, the fiercer the battle becomes. Satan hates that Cross. If you really stand in spirit on the ground of the Cross, you are in for a battle: he will do anything to move you off that ground. The Lord Jesus will come back just to finish off that whole conflict for the Church as He did it in Himself — or perhaps we should say to finish it in the Church as He did it for the Church. When He comes, that will wind up, once and for all, the reign of Satan, the kingdom of darkness. That is why He is coming.

"The Coming Of The Son Of Man"

Let me just emphasize one point again: it is the "coming of the Son of Man", (Matt. 24:27,37,39). That is how He put it: "the coming of the Son of Man". I am sorry that Sankey changed those words in that hymn of his that we sometimes sing:

"Oh, wondrous day! oh, glorious morning,  
When the Son of God shall come".

The Lord speaks, and the Scriptures speak, of the coming of the Son of Man, not of the Son of God. It is true, it is the Son of God Who is coming; but you understand the very real point here. It was Man for man, as Man, all the way through; and it will be that at the end. The Incarnation has no significance, if it is not Man for man. The earthly life has no meaning if it is not Man for man. The Cross has no meaning if it is not Man for man. The same of the resurrection, the same of the ascension and enthronement: it is the Man in the glory. "We behold... Jesus" — Jesus, that is His human title — "crowned with glory and honour", (Heb. 2:9). It is Man for man in Heaven. The Church is the birth of the "one new man" by the "Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven", (1 Pet. 1:12b). And the coming again is Man for man: it is Man consummating this whole thing in relation to man, and man entering into his inheritance in Christ. All this marvellous thing is for man — for you and for me! He is coming as the Son of Man.

There are immense things bound up with that title. It denotes relationship to the human race: all His work for the human race, and His representation of the human race in Heaven. The present appeal is to men, on the basis of all that. Oh, what a caricature of it all has come about with "Christmas"! Think of it in the light of what we have said about the Incarnation, the redemption, the re-constituting and the glorifying of man: where does that come in, in the common Christmas of our time? The Devil has just switched the whole thing over, and made it a contradiction of its real meaning. He has used it as a means to draw out that other man, the old man, into glutting himself for his own gratification. And so in everything else — the thing has been given a wrong turn. In the coming of the Lord Jesus that will all be put right.

But, in the meantime, His appeal to us — to man — is on the ground of this, that He came for our redemption. He came to make us different, to reconstitute us: He came to perfect us after His own image: He came to glorify us. He has shown in His own life here that it can be done. It has been done in a Man. It can be done, for He has done it. We are told: "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.", (1 John 3:8b). He came to destroy the works of the Devil, and He has done it in His Cross. He is appealing to us on a very, very large ground. This is all redemption: redemption is a tremendous thing. We have a great redemption, because we have a Great Redeemer. We have been thinking of the time when He is coming to put the last great touches to it all, to give the final touch to this whole wonderful redemption — of man, of the earth, of the whole creation: "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints", (2 Thess. 1:10).

I believe I speak for more than myself, when I say that there seems to be something in the air that says His coming must be near. We seem to feel that it cannot be far off. As the Lord's children, we "groan within ourselves" more than ever; and there is an increasing groan in the whole creation. The travail in this creation is becoming almost unbearable. This earth needs redeeming; God only knows what will happen to it, if it is not redeemed. But however that may be, there is something in the spirit of the true child of God which says that His coming is drawing nigh. It is the only hope — there is no hope in any other direction. Everybody recognizes that, saved and unsaved alike. Unless God Almighty intervenes, there is no hope for this world.

Ah, but He is going to intervene! He is going to intervene in His Son, and there is the hope. And so the Apostle speaks of that "blessed hope" — the "appearing of the glory of our... Saviour Jesus Christ", (Tit. 2:13). May the Lord fill us with new joy in the very contemplation of His near coming, to complete all that which He has begun.