

The Throne of God and

The House of God.

“UNTO THE SON HE SAITH, THY THRONE, O GOD,
IS FOR EVER AND EVER.”—*Heb. i. 8.*

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THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE HOUSE OF GOD.

No. I.

THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE MAN ON THE THRONE.

(EXO. XXV. 21, 22; LEV. XVI. 11-14; HEB. I.-II. 5.)

My thought is to point out some of the characteristics of the throne of God as indicated in Hebrews i., where we have a wider view of the throne than in the body of the epistle, which treats of it as a throne of grace and approach during the present period. In the Old Testament these characteristics come out also from time to time in God's dealings with man.

Every one will admit that God has a throne and that He retains the reins of government in His own hands; also that He upholds all things. He may permit other thrones here upon earth to accomplish His purposes, although they may not seem to us to tend to that end. He is, however, above all the thrones that ever were established upon earth and works out His

own good pleasure, which shall triumph in the end even by that which seems to militate against it.

It may not be so generally understood, perhaps, that God will rule "all things" by a Man. I do not mean that it is not known that the Lord became a Man, but it has very little entered into the hearts and consciences of some believers that He is the One who is to rule over "all things" in heaven and upon earth. To enter really into this enlarges the heart. One may know Christ in a character suitable to man as a sinner without giving sufficient credence to the thought that there is a Man under whose authority everything is to be put in the coming day, and consequently under whose hand everything should be recognised to-day. That which in the purpose of God shall be is the subject of testimony to-day. "The Lord God will do nothing but he will shew it unto his servants the prophets," so that we have the testimony to-day of that which is to be in the coming day. That testimony coming to ears that have been opened to listen to His voice and to hearts which are obedient to Him forms us in order that we may do His will in the present interval.

Hebrews i. gathers up in a very remarkable way the principles of the throne of God. It is true that in the body of the epistle only those

principles which are connected with it as a throne of grace and of approach to God are pressed. While it is stated that Christ as Son upholds "all things by the word of his power," it is also said, "We see not yet all things put under him." In chapter ix. 5 the apostle distinctly states that it is not *now* the time to speak in detail of the governmental side, as set forth in the cherubim, the higher thought for us at the present moment of drawing near, into the very presence of God, filling his mind. Still, the symbols are in the epistle, and we may trace seven characteristics of the throne, which surely have a voice for faith to-day in governing heart and conscience.

(1) The throne of God is the place whence the mind of God is made known. (2) The testimony of purgation of sins is there, since atonement is wrought and Christ is there; the throne is established in righteousness. (3) There is a Man upon the throne, provisionally the Father's, but to sit eventually upon His own throne. (4) He will have companions with Him there from among those with whom He came to sojourn for a while here. (5) He will have attendants upon the majesty of His throne; angels who are now ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (6) God the Holy Spirit is down here as the Witness to all this. (7) His enemies shall be made His foot-

stool; there is no escape if we neglect so great salvation.

Let us look for a moment at these seven characteristics of the throne of God. In Exodus xxv. it is figured in the ark and the mercy seat; thence God ruled Israel. But the principles connected with the throne whence the Son, who is God, will rule the world to come are more fully set forth in our chapter, and these apply to us to-day. The first is that thence we have

THE REVELATION OF THE MIND OF GOD.

In Exodus xxv. 22 we read, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." God did not meet Israel here. He met them at the altar, as chapter xxix. 43 shews, but God met Moses at the mercy seat. Israel never had any right of access to the mercy seat. None but Moses and Aaron, types of Christ, approached the throne, and there God revealed His mind to Moses. (See Num. vii. 89.) But everything in the New Testament comes out in a much fuller and more wonderful way, and we have a complete revelation of the mind of God with reference to everything in Christ,

Israel, the assembly, and "all things" in heaven and earth. Let it be noted that there is nothing that is withheld from us of what His purpose is in Christ. He has treated us as friends, as when He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" This was with reference to the destruction of Sodom, and He has not hidden from us that which He has purposed in reference to the world when all is put in subjection under the Son.

Now in Hebrews i. 2 we have "God . . . hath in the end of these days spoken unto us in the person of his Son." It is not a mere human channel through which He has spoken to us, but it is the Person of the Son, in whom God is fully revealed. In Him God has spoken to us, and thus He draws attention to the wonderful fact that He will establish His throne in glory in Him presently. Wonderfully profound is this! It is the glory of the Son, the glory of this blessed Man, which underlies the first two chapters of Hebrews.

That which in the Old Testament had been partially revealed from time to time has been gathered up and is now focussed. This enables us to trace each ray of light to Christ the Son of God, the centre from where it emanates in fuller glory. Now we know that God's own lips have spoken to us and revealed to us all that which He has purposed in the coming day.

No one has any excuse for neglecting what has been revealed.

Further, it at "first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Nothing we shall enter into in the coming day, when Christ shall sit upon His throne, will be outside the testimony of God which the Lord began on earth. Should one say, "I do not know all!" is it not because of want of diligence and the placing too little value upon what has been revealed, to make it a life study? So we often come short when it becomes a question of what the principles of God are, and how we ought to act in the exigencies of a day like this.

The Spirit of God here reveals to us the principles of the kingdom that is to be set up by-and-by in glory, in order that it may now be set up in the hearts of His people. These principles are for guidance in every footstep of our pathway here, that we may not be in darkness ourselves, nor obscure to others the truths which have been already revealed. Alas! how much of this there is. Whereas we should not only have light within us, but light shining from us, a luminous body, as in Luke xi. 36: "As when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." The more we know of the ways of God, the more luminous we shall become, until our whole body will be full of light. Thus

shall we be to the glory of Christ, the Son of God, in whom all the mind of God is revealed. No honour can be greater.

Now the glory of the Son comes out. "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." This is written to Jews who expected a Messiah who would be David's heir and Israel's king. But the One in whom God has spoken to us has been appointed heir, not of a mere earthly throne, but of "all things."

It is well to understand what the "all things" include. It is quite a technical expression; we shall find it again and again here. Colossians i. 16, which also speaks of it, opens it out a little. It comprises "things that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him and for him." Note the importance of this. He is to take the "all things" and rule them aright: He, the Son of man, the Son of God! No man that trod the earth, save this Second man, could take up and rule all things to the glory of God.

Therefore God says, I will overturn, overturn, overturn, every one who makes a pretension to the throne, till He shall come. He is appointed heir of all things, the worlds were made by Him, and He is the brightness of the glory of God, the exact expression of His substance.

The second characteristic of the throne is, that *there* is the witness that Christ has made

PURGATION FOR SINS.

This is indicated in Leviticus xvi. 14. God has purposed blessing for the world, which He will include in the "all things" which are to be ruled over by Christ. In that case, because sin has stained the world, atonement must be made. We do not find blood, the witness of atonement made, put upon the mercy seat, the figure of the throne of God, till we come to Leviticus xvi. We have the blood put on the golden altar once a year, on the great day of atonement (Exo. xxx. 10), but we do not see the blood put upon the throne till Leviticus xvi.

The reason may be, that when directions were given for the throne to be made, Israel was in relation with God, and the priesthood was the link, whilst in Leviticus xvi. not only the people, but the priesthood had failed; and the blood upon the mercy seat indicated the opening of the holiest for a people in an established relationship with God, and a priesthood which should never fail. But for this atonement must be made.

There are differences in the way of the application of the blood. It was again and again put upon the horns of the altar, when the sacrifices were brought which were an acknowledgment of sins on the part of those who

brought them. Then it was put upon the horns of the golden altar once a year, as we have seen. But deeper than all, it was to be put upon the mercy seat once a year, the witness of atonement made. In this way the throne of God was to be vindicated, in connection with the whole creation, which was tarnished by the sin of the creature. This is what is referred to in verse 3, "When he had by himself made purgation for sins."

But it is not only "by Himself," as a sacrifice, wonderful as is the love set forth by this; but it is "*for* Himself," that is, for His own glory. There is a reflective force in the word used, which indicates this. Though all things are His by title of creation, as the appointed Heir, and as the gift of the Father, yet He will not take them up in the condition in which they are, as stained with sin, because that would not be for His glory, nor for the glory of the Father.

Take an illustration—A father leaves a large estate to his son, but it is encumbered with debts all round. The son says, "I will not touch it until I have relieved it of every claim upon it." Presently he finds himself able to redeem the inheritance, and then he takes it up and administers it to the praise of himself and his father. There is not a single debt upon it. That is the idea, though it is not a question of mere debt but a moral question, that of sin, of life and death, of good and evil. Now no one but

Christ could settle this, and He only by His death. Thus it is by Himself and for Himself; it is well to get hold of this.

Again, it is not that He purged our sins; the word *our* should be omitted. The thought is larger, though this is included in it. He made purgation for sins, that is, for the whole of that over which He will reign by-and-by. There is no purgatory, nothing that will purge, but the blood of Christ. When He had thus vindicated the throne of God on account of the whole creation, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high—taking a place so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Now the purpose of God comes out, that by man, the very being who had most dishonoured Him, He shall be most glorified. Ah, yes! but what sort of Man must He be who could do this? Then the glory of that blessed One as becoming Man is followed out. He is more glorious than angels, to none of whom He said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This is a different view of the Sonship of Christ to that which is presented in verse 2. There it is the eternal Son, in whose Person God spoke to us. Here it is Son of God, as born a Man upon earth. It is a quotation from Psalm ii. and is cited in Acts xiii. in a way that proves it refers to Him as a Man born into the world.

But not only was He Son by birth, but He was characteristically Son, as it further says, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." (Ver. 5.) This indicates the moral upholding of the glory of the Father in the person of the Son. David said in his prayer, "Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, is God *to* Israel." (1 Chron. xvii. 24.) His being God to Israel is practical and dependent upon their being morally and characteristically His people. So in 2 Corinthians vi. 17, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord . . . and I will be a Father to you." He is the Father of believers, but He will be a Father *to* them if they are morally His sons and daughters. Now Christ was ever that, He was the eternal Son, was born a Son and was characteristically Son. The glory as of an only begotten with a Father was there. Never could it be said that an act of His was unworthy of a Son. "I do always those things that please him." He was morally what He should be, and John says, "We beheld his glory." Again, we have, "Let all the angels of God worship him." And, "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." They are servants, He is Son.

He whom angels worship is addressed as God and sits as

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” Here we pass altogether beyond what was in the figure in Israel, though it was ever in the mind of God. There man in the person of the priest approached that which figured the throne, but he never touched it. He put the blood upon the mercy seat and withdrew. This was done every year, and the sacrifice being acceptable relationship with God was established for Israel for twelve months. Christ when He had made purgation for sins sat Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This is the chief of the characteristics of the throne. The throne of God is to be administered by a Man—marvellous truth! A Man who is owned as superior to angels and with whom none of the principalities or powers in heavenly places can be compared. The blessed Man whom we know as our Redeemer and our Friend, He sits upon the throne and we need not fear.

Here is the fulfilment of the dim vision of the prophet, long after the types of Judaism were given, when he saw upon the throne of glory, upborne by the living creatures whose wheels touched the earth and whose eyes saw all that went on in earth, the likeness of the appearance of a man upon it. (Ezek. i. 26.) Or again,

where the Son of Man is brought before the Ancient of Days to receive for Himself a kingdom, dominion and glory, that all nations and peoples and languages should serve Him. A kingdom and dominion which shall never pass away. (Dan. vii. 13, 14.)

The fact then that there is a Man upon the throne is pregnant with the most important results, for God, for man, and for all things. God's purposes are thus fulfilled. Man's blessing is secured in a way far above the earth, for which he was originally created, though all that was foreshadowed as his upon earth shall be also brought in. Satan is defeated, who had dragged man down to his own level; and seeing it is the Son of man who is Son of God, in whom now all is vested, the "all things" of which He is Head shall be blessed in the coming age by the benign and beneficent administration through this exalted Man of all the grace that is in the heart of God for His creatures.

But there is more: the holy nature of this blessed Man proves Him to be God. (Ver. 9.) A citation from Psalm xlv. 7 reads, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." Now this is holiness. Then in the margin of the psalm it is, "Therefore, *O God*, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." That which recognises His Godhead,

proved by His holy nature manifested as a man, shews at the same time that He will have

COMPANIONS WITH HIM IN GLORY.

Doubtless the verse is quoted to prove His infinite superiority to all who may share His glory with Him, yet it does prove by the way that He has such companions. He will not take the throne alone.

Now there never was a mere man who loved righteousness and hated iniquity. A man may become holy, but he is not inherently holy. Adam did not love righteousness and hate iniquity, or he never would have fallen, even for Eve's sake. There was but one holy Man, proved in His very being to be such, and He is addressed as God. And when thus addressed, fellows of His glory are spoken of. Marvellous fact!

Who are these companions? He came down into this world in order to obtain them. He found them in ruin and misery, and identifying Himself with them sets aside for ever their state and raises them to glory and gladness. This is indicated by the oil of gladness with which all are anointed, He above all. Oil is always a type of the Spirit in scripture, and gladness is the spring of praise; so that it is the spirit of praise which is given to this wonderful company. God hath appointed unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of

praise for the spirit of heaviness; thus will they be His companions to sing the praise of God after Him throughout eternity, though He exceeds in everything. Not only so, but there will not be a single note of praise which does not ascend to God through the church.

Christ will have His companions, who will be a company of priests to celebrate the glory of the throne and of the King who sits upon it, as of the God whose throne it is. Christ will be owned to be worthy of adoration by His companions, who will also sing with Him to the praise of the Father, who has set Him forth the only Man worthy to hold the sceptre, worthy of praise.

But the eternal glory of that blessed Man is now celebrated. He had cried in the days of His flesh, "O my God, cut me not off in the midst of my days." (Psa. cii. 24.) The answer comes at once, Thou hast neither beginning of days nor end of life. All things in heaven and earth are the work of Thy hands from the beginning. They shall perish, but THOU REMAINEST; they all shall wax old, but THOU ART THE SAME. Eternal, divine, blessed Being! Art Thou the One who speakest of companions with Thee in Thy glory?

Note also the connection of these two citations which are given together. He will have companions with Him, anointed with the oil of

gladness, who shall sing the praise of God for ever. This, even amid the wreck of worlds and the removal of all things that have been tarnished by sin.

When He laid the foundations of the earth the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. When created things change and perish, He is the same! He remains! And He has with Him a company connected with those things that cannot be shaken, and which remain to His praise. The beginning and the end of all things are to His praise!

The next characteristic is that

ANGELS ARE THE ATTENDANTS OF THE
MAJESTY OF HIS THRONE.

In verse 7 we have, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." And again, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Ver. 14.) This may be prefigured in Exodus xxv. 17-20 where the cherubim are of the mercy seat, and form the sides of the throne. Other scriptures also describe the symbolic creatures, cherub, and seraph (flame of fire), as the executors of His judgment and mercy. The cherubim seem more connected with judgment and the divine attributes, according to the principles of the throne, while the seraphim are

more occupied with mercy and the divine nature. (See Isa. vi.) The angels, who are doubtless the executive in that which is here symbolically set forth, have additionally the work of ministering to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Possibly we do not sufficiently appreciate this. How securely would the believer rest, if he realised in his heart that that which is true of Christ—"and angels came and ministered to him" in the wilderness—is true of him also in a measure! It is written of Him, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. But it may be asked, May the believer expect that God will take care of His own, more than of other men in a providential way? In any case, it does not say that angels are sent forth to minister to those who are *not* heirs of salvation. There may be many heirs of salvation who are not yet called, or who are not in the enjoyment of salvation, and to these the angels minister, doubtless, for their mission is to those who shall be heirs. From their birth to the time of their departure from earth, the heirs of salvation have angelic attendants. Paul speaks of God having sanctified him even from his birth. Spiritual things are not in angels' hands, but temporal, providential and governmental matters seem to be. The principle is as true for us as

for Christ. It is certain, as the word of God is certain. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?" Now of all this

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A WITNESS.

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." (Chap. ii. 4.) It is of the utmost importance to lay hold of this aspect of the Spirit's presence on earth. In this epistle He is the witness to heavenly truth, and not the power by which we lay hold of the truth. It will land us in confusion if we suppose that in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Holy Spirit is looked at as the power by which we accomplish anything. Only once in the epistle is He spoken of in the latter way, and this is in the case of Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God."

Faith, on the other hand, is the principle here by which we lay hold of the testimony which the Holy Spirit bears—that Christ, the Messiah, is Son of God, that He has made purgation for sins, that He sits as a Man upon the throne and is to rule all things, and that He is to have companions with Him in the glory from among those who receive this testimony about Him to-day. God has said, "Yet have I set my King upon my

holy hill of Zion," and He shall be seen there in the fulness of the time. But He has also given Him a heavenly throne, and the principles of that throne are to govern all who belong to Him to-day. The Holy Spirit is a witness to this. Faith is the principle by which it is apprehended. So we have a whole chapter (xi.) on the characteristics of faith. It is all faith, from beginning to end.

Mark also the trinity of the persons is here. It is God's throne; Christ having made purgation will administer it, and the Holy Spirit is down here as witness to it, and He warns all to be subject to this throne now and to Him who will sit there.

What throne does the heart own to-day, we ask ourselves? What principles are to rule us? The demand upon the heart of the believer is for allegiance in all the details of life to God's Man and to His throne. Opposition may have to be met, but there are angels to help. Let us be of good courage and prove ourselves true men. We may be called upon to give up here, but it is better to be on the line of giving up, than of acquiring, as far as this world goes. Let any increase be in that world where Christ rules alone. Many a snare shall we be saved from if this be so, and the life of Christ will shine the brighter in us here.

This salvation being so great, no wonder the apostle asks

Christ is to have universal empire. To this the Holy Spirit bears witness. God has said to Him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until thy foes be made thy footstool." In due time He will take His own throne, and those who receive Him to-day will be the companions of His glory. Then all who have refused Him will be counted as His enemies and become the footstool for His feet. He is the Head of every man, and if a man is not owning the authority of Christ, he is a rebel and will be treated as a rebel.

If we, who have professed to receive this great salvation, neglect it, how shall we escape? This is a question applied directly to the Hebrew believers, because some of them were in danger of turning aside to Judaism. It extends itself, to-day, to every man. If a man neglects it in the form of the gospel, there is no escape for him. If believers neglect it, there is no escape; the heart having nothing to support it is swamped by earthly things. It has been often said, this question has no answer. But chapter xii. 25-27 gives the answer: "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." God grant us grace, that we may not neglect so great salvation!



No. II.

OUR PRESENT INTEREST IN THE MAN ON THE THRONE.

(HEB. II. 5-18.)

WE have already noticed some of the characteristics of the throne of God. It cannot be too vividly impressed upon our minds, that the authority vested in Christ is universal in its bearing; that He who, as God, is appointed Heir of all things in chapter i., is viewed as Man in chapter ii., and under Him all things are put. The word is emphatic—"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." And then it is enforced by a negative—"There is nothing that is not put under him." This gives an idea of the character of the throne. It was figured, perhaps, in Nebuchadnezzar's throne, where the empire was for earth. But this throne is in heaven, and the empire of the Lord Jesus Christ is universal in its truest sense. The whole universe is put under His feet, though "now we see not yet all things put under him."

In principle, that is the throne upon which Christ sits now; though provisionally on the

Father's throne, everything is put under His feet; God has given Him authority over everything. It follows directly from this, that the man who is not subject to Him is a rebel. The kingdom is already set up in the hearts of His people, though not only are the people of God put under Christ, but all men and all things.

The second chapter introduces Christ as Priest, which is the proper subject of this epistle, and at once we see we have a present interest in Him, as we see Him crowned with glory and honour. The first two chapters give the whole scheme of the epistle, the rest work it out in detail. It is all presented in contrast to truth that was familiar to these Jewish Christians. God had spoken on earth, at Mount Sinai and later in the Tabernacle, through Moses, to an earthly people called to enter an earthly rest. Here, God speaks from heaven, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost, in the House, to a people called to enter a heavenly rest.

Meanwhile He establishes the assembly upon earth, where God may be praised. The object throughout the epistle is the same, God Himself, that He may be praised. Here, then, it is—"In the midst of the church will I praise thee." And, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." It is well to know His purposes, that we may enter into His present thoughts for us.

In chapter i. Christ comes from God to

man, as Apostle; in chapter ii. He goes back to God for man, as High Priest. This is very precious, and we have the key to it in a detail of the dress of the high priest of old—the Urim and Thummim. There was a mystery about these, and we have no directions as to making them. All that is known is that the words mean—Lights and Perfections. In Christ we have the mind of God fully revealed to us in the Person of the Son; God has come out in “Light.” As High Priest, we have man taken in and upborne before God in all His “perfection.” Nothing will lift the soul above itself like the knowledge that it is in relationship with Christ before God, in all His perfection. No man has ever attained to what he should be, but in Christ we have perfection, and every little bit of spiritual knowledge we make our own is valuable and lets a flood of divine light into the soul.

The Jews expected the kingdom to be immediately established on earth, in glory. But the Messiah has been presented and rejected, and the glory has gone back with Him to heaven, though His authority is owned by His people on earth to-day. We see not yet all things put under Him, for God must bring the many sons to glory, with Christ in heaven, before the kingdom is finally established. This also is future; we the sons are not yet in glory. Mean-

while God carries out His thoughts for the *present* time, He has set up a building in which His praise is now celebrated. There Christ hymns His praise. Do you sing after Him?

To turn to details, verse 5 says—"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection

THE HABITABLE EARTH TO COME;

but one in a certain place testifieth, saying—What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" The angels are inferior to Christ, as Son, in chapter i., but here, where it is a question of the subjugation of the habitable earth to come, they have no place or rule at all. Man is the great object of God's creation, as seen in Genesis and John. In Genesis i. angels are not mentioned, and other creatures but cursorily, until man is reached; then his relationships with God are pursued. In John i. they are mentioned, but only to throw them into contrast with man, for whom the life was the light. Man is God's object; we should not therefore look up to or worship angels. The law was given by angels, and the Jews looked up to them, and philosophy would draw us aside to them again.

But in the habitable earth to come man is superior to angels, for all angels worship the Man, Christ Jesus, and all things are to be put under Him. Angels are the executive of God in government and providence, and are ministering

spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation. To man, then, God has subjected "the habitable earth to come." This expression refers to earth. In chapter vi. is another expression, the powers of "the age to come." This is a different word, and suggests a more comprehensive thought. It occurs again in Ephesians i., where Christ, being raised from the dead, has a name given Him above every name, not only in this age, but in the "age to come." This opens out the universal empire of Christ over heavenly as well as earthly things; an age when the habitable earth shall be ruled from heaven, when God shall have headed up all things in Christ, who is already gone into heaven, and who is seated at God's right hand, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.

Psalm viii., which is cited here, is evidently a night psalm. Some are morning psalms, some evening, but this is a night psalm. David speaks of moon and stars, but not of the sun; the darkness of night surrounds him, illumined by the moon only. He is watching his flocks by night and looks up to consider the heavens. It is characteristic of the worthies of old that they considered God's works. Moses is another instance; he, seeing the bush burn with fire but unconsumed, turned aside to consider the great sight, and doubtless learned the lesson designed. But David speaks of God's glory above the

heavens, leaving an opening for all that may be seen there afterwards in the clause, "Who hast set thy glory above the heavens." He argues from the order that reigns in the created heavens to that which shall obtain when the Messiah reigns on earth.

The apostle, though in the night of man's day, looks up into heaven, and a very different sight occupies his heart to that which occupied David's. He does not speak of moon or stars, nor even of the sun, but looks through the opening provided in Psalm viii. 1, "Who hast set thy glory above the heavens," and sees the full glory of God radiating from the face of Jesus Christ. Wondrous sight! "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and beauty." There are two words used for "see" here. In "We see not yet all things put under him" the word used indicates a glance round the horizon. In that direction we see confusion, sin, disease, dishonour, death. All God's original order for the earth is turned upside down. Still the words "not yet" indicate that they shall all be put under Him eventually, when the full time is come. The other word indicates a steady, fixed gaze at an object; for us the glory and beauty of the Man at God's right hand, Jesus—the Surety of our being there eventually. This is a sight which is suited to us as we are, a sight which will sustain a soul in the midst of the confusion around. We see

Jesus! May God fully occupy our hearts with Him.

The words translated "Glory and honour" here are the equivalents of those translated "glory and beauty" in the description of the high priest's dress in Exodus xxviii. On that dress the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were twice inscribed, once on the breastplate and once on the shoulder-pieces. So our names are engraved on the heart and on the shoulders of Christ. His affections are ours; the measure of which is the death He endured for us. His strength also is ours; its omnipotence, shewn in that He burst the bands of death and rose again triumphant to the right hand of God, thence to make us the objects of His affection and strength while we are here. This at once introduces Him as One in whom we have a present interest as Priest for approach, while subject to Him as Lord.

In this portion there are five reasons for Christ's dying. First,

HE TASTED DEATH FOR EVERYTHING.

There is a blessed suggestion here that it was through the suffering of death He was crowned. True, for this cause He was made a little lower than the angels, but this is how He won that place in glory for us. God has put all things under His feet, but before all things can be sub-

jected to Him He must Himself be put into the very dust of death. He tasted death in all its bitterness, as we shall never taste it. But by the *grace* of God *He* tasted death and that for all things that are put under Him. Hence it is *everything* (a wider thought than *every man*), all that will be subjected to Him, for creation is tarnished and corrupted by man's sin. Adam's sin made the world subject to the bondage of corruption, but Christ will clear it by His death. His omnipotent power enabled Him to overcome the enemy in his last stronghold. He has thus on behalf of all things fulfilled the scripture, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hos. xiii. 14.) Now He is on high, and we can say by faith, "We see Jesus." Blessed sight! We anticipate the time when all things shall enter into the blessing He has secured for them.

But there is yet another thing. If He is crowned with glory and beauty, we are to be with Him, crowned with glory and beauty also. This brings the second aspect of His death before us, for in order to accomplish this He must be

MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

In Exodus xxviii. 40 we read, "For Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty." No doubt

what we have in Hebrews ii. 10 refers to this: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." If Aaron is clothed with glory and beauty, his sons are to be so clothed. And if Christ is in glory, He brings many sons there also; but in order to do this He must taste of death, and this presents the second reason for His death. Not only did He taste death for everything over which He shall reign, but He went down into death as the perfection of suffering, that He might bring many sons to glory.

It is a humbling thought that if God would bring many sons to glory with Christ, Christ must first bow His blessed head in death. His death is the ground of our going to glory, so we sing, "Our title to glory we read in Thy blood." Title means, the chief thing or event by which anything becomes ours; and though God purposed us for glory, He must put Christ into death before He could receive us and the blood becomes our title. Sinners such as we are could have no other title. Wherever the glory is spoken of in connection with ourselves, the sufferings and death of Christ are closely connected with it in the same scripture.

What a wonderful thought it is that, when we are with Him there in glory, we shall see, not

only all things put under His feet, but we ourselves shall be associated with Him in His glory.

Are we then to wait until we are in the glory with Him before we offer the sacrifice of praise? Far be the thought. In the present time we celebrate His praise. Indeed, no praise goes up from earth to-day but that which is produced by the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints who compose the church. From the scene of sorrow and confusion itself, where all things are not put under Him, not a single note of praise goes up to His ear. Nothing but groan, groan, groan on every hand. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But God cannot do without His praise, and if we are linked with the groaning creation by the body, we are linked with Christ in the glory by the Spirit, so that God is able to get His praise from us now. Blessed thought! Wonderful praise, as it comes up from the midst of a groaning creation, to which it is such a contrast.

Now, if we are to be in glory with Him, there are several ways in which He identifies Himself with us down here and ourselves with Him. He speaks of us as

ALL OF ONE.

"For both he which sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he

is not ashamed to call them brethren." The whole family, as it were, springs out of the death of Christ. He is "the corn of wheat" and we are the "much fruit." This is more than "company," it is source or origin. As soon as we are in relationship with Christ in this way, He can say, "My Father and your Father." There is no equality, for the Person of the Sanctifier is always carefully guarded from the sanctified; we are a sanctified, consecrated company in relationship with Him. Aaron alone was sanctified by oil, which typifies the Holy Spirit, without blood. Aaron's sons on the other hand needed blood and oil. We could not have to do with God without blood, but Christ needed it not. He has gone in with blood to appear for us, and the priest always represented the people where they are to be. Chapters x. 14 and xiii. 12 shew that we are sanctified by the blood of Christ. It is not by the Spirit of God; indeed, sanctification by the Spirit of God is not in Hebrews at all.

There are three expressions used as to our relationship with Christ in this chapter: "sons" we have had (ver. 10), now here (ver. 11), "brethren," and lastly (ver. 13), "children." "Sons" links us with glory in the fulness of the expression; "brethren" gives us community of relationship and connects us with the church; "children" puts us into present priestly service,

not simply the family; the idea is that of the children of Aaron.

There are three scriptures also cited to shew the reality of Christ's identification with us and ours with Him, according to God's present thoughts for us, "all of one." The first is, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren," and at once we enter into the sphere of praise.

"IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY WILL I HYMN
THY PRAISE."

This whole verse comes after "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." We should, perhaps, think otherwise, but there is no identification with Christ before the platform of resurrection is reached. This is the basis of all God's dealings with men and is thus the basis of praise. The Father's name is first declared, "My Father and your Father," and as we enter into the joy of this we can sing.

Singing is the highest act of praise and is specially adapted for the church. Nothing is more abused than the hymn book. The remedy is not, however, to shut the hymn book, but to seek grace to use it aright. There is nothing like our praise hymns yet in heaven. Heaven has not heard the song to the Father's praise yet, save from the lips of Christ. Passing sweet that must be! The vaults of heaven await the full chorus.

The people of God are one with Christ in resurrection to-day, and are thus enabled to sing His praises down here in the assembly. How wonderful that those who were bondslaves should be so freed and endowed as to be able to give to God. Yet Christ has struck off the shackles with which Satan had bound the hands of men, and now in the power of the Holy Spirit we can come with filled hands into the presence of God.

We have in Ephesians and Colossians, as the expression of the filling up of the heart in praise, amid the blessings of the new creation, psalms and hymns and spiritual odes. A psalm is experience, a hymn is direct praise, and a spiritual ode is the ebullition of the heart for special blessing received; these compass all our time both private and public. All are not, however, suitable for assembly praise for which hymns expressing adoration to the Father or to the Son or to the Lamb are needed.

The next scripture cited involves His identification with us in incarnation down here: it is from Isaiah viii. 17.

I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.

This might seem to us to come first, but there can be, as we have said, no relationship with Christ apart from resurrection. Still it is very blessed to know that He has been here, and that

we may find His footsteps here, and take comfort from the fact that He has had like experiences to our own. In the scripture cited, Messiah, viewed as having been rejected by Israel, warns the remnant against the confederacies of men—they should neither be afraid nor fear, but sanctify the Lord God in their hearts. Then the testimony is bound up among the disciples, and Messiah waits upon God, though Israel be set aside until the time comes when God will give Him the kingdom. He says, "I will wait upon Jehovah." "I will look for him." It is this verse that is referred to, though the expression breathes also the spirit of Psalm xvi. and other scriptures.

He has been identified thus, with a waiting people upon earth, and we may well wait with Him, sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, and finding in Him a sanctuary, so that we may pass the time of waiting in praising, and not in murmuring and wondering. The time of glory will come as surely as He is there. We may also take comfort from this verse when sorely tried and stricken; when prop after prop has been knocked from under us, and we cry out in distress, I have no one to trust in but the Lord, then we are right. There is no other trust that is right this side of glory.

The next quotation is from the same chapter—

“BEHOLD I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM
GOD HATH GIVEN ME.”

It runs on in Isaiah, “Are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord.” But that is not omitted here, as the signs and wonders are not yet in that way. In the future the Jews will see the Gentile dogs, Christians whom they despised, in nearer relationship with Him whom they recognise as Messiah than themselves, and will wonder that so marvellous a relationship had been reserved for them. But now it is Christ presenting the children given to Him as a sanctified company to God, as typified in Aaron and his sons, to praise and serve Him in the assembly.

Have we faith to follow Him as children hanging on His skirts? For we are all priests if we know the power of our consecration. We should have no timidity in presenting to God the fruits of accomplished redemption, satisfying His heart with praise. The first breath of real life is praise. Deliverance appreciated draws forth praise; but while the children of Israel sang on the Red Sea shore, they are not represented in scripture as singing again for thirty-eight years; a solemn consideration! Many a saint praises God at his conversion, and not again until his death-bed. All is completed on God's side, then why not gather around Christ continually as

priests, belonging to the sanctified company. Alas ! that so few are in the power of their consecration. Consecration in the figure is "hands filled," and that by another ; for us it is more heart and mouth filled. How little idea have so many thousands of His saints of gathering thus around Him who says, "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me."

The remaining portion of the chapter gives three other reasons for Christ's death, and they are with a view to delivering His saints from the disabilities which hinder them from coming into the holiest as priests. They shew Him coming down into their circumstances, that they may have everything lifted off their shoulders. The first disability is the power of death ; the second, sins, imputation ; the third, weakness.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part in the same ; that through death he might

DESTROY HIM THAT HAD THE POWER OF DEATH."

This is a third reason for His tasting death, namely, to deliver from the fear of death those whom the devil had held in bondage all their lifetime. If not delivered from the power of death we cannot enter by the new and living way, as in chapter x. Death is a disability to worship. If not raised above it in the power of Christ's risen life we shall be affected somehow,

personally or relatively, and shall not enter the holiest.

Aaron may illustrate this, when death seized his sons (Lev. x.), he was under the power of death and consequently could not rise to perform his priestly functions. It is true, when he pleaded "Such things have befallen me," that Moses was content; death had hindered him from rising to his privileges. It is ever thus, both human sorrow and joy hinder and never help what is spiritual. This is something far deeper than mere deliverance from the fear of the article of death, for oneself personally. It tests how far our hopes and joys are connected with another scene in the power of a new life. The way into the holiest is the way of the living. All in connection with it is living. The living God; a risen, living Christ; a living people in the power of His risen life. There death cannot hinder; we are superior to it.

Christ came near and partook of flesh and blood—a beautiful expression—in order to deliver the children from this fear. Let it never hinder our praising Him. Death, when met in power, brings life into such activity that praise is increased. So may it ever be! A lowly walk with the power of death practically upon all things here will enable us to own His hand and praise Him more and more.

Next, He tasted death to deliver us from sins,

that is as imputation or guilt on the conscience. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest.

TO MAKE PROPITIATION FOR THE SINS OF
THE PEOPLE.

The worshippers must have no more conscience of sins, must be raised above all fear of imputation. The sense of the guilt of sins upon the conscience is a hindrance to worship, and would deter one from entering the holiest. Deliverance from this is only to be had by a full assurance of the efficacy of the propitiation Christ made. One could not really believe that the guilt of the sin had been laid upon Christ and have the sense of it upon the conscience too. That is an impossibility. But there is a very loose way of talking about trust in Christ and His blood, when the awful reality to Him of the propitiation and its divine efficacy to usward is not at all apprehended. God seeks worship, but if a single sin be upon the conscience it is hindered for the time being.

But if it be asked, May I then sin recklessly without any conscience about it? Far be the thought! If the guilt of sin cannot be put upon the conscience the sorrow of it will fill the heart, only God has made provision for this in another way. Now Christ, having stooped right down past the angels and taken hold of the seed of Abraham, *ought* (wonderful word!)

in all things to be made like to His brethren, and to make a propitiation that will, when laid hold of in the power of a living faith, deliver from all fear of imputation of sins and thus clear away the hindrance to our drawing nigh to God.

And note that He is here High Priest "in things pertaining to God," that is, on God's side. This expression occurs here and in chapter v. 1. It occurs also twice in Leviticus vii. in the law of the peace offering. He would have us draw nigh to God, to enjoy all things with Him and to His praise.

To this end He has passed through all the sufferings that His people pass through, even unto death, that He may be able

TO SUCCOUR THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED.

He is now personally out of the sufferings and at the right hand of power. But His sympathies obtained in this scene teach Him how to apply that power to His own in any suffering they may be enduring, even to death; to speak a word in season to him that is weary! How much we need this each heart knows, for though we might be above the power of death and clear of all imputation, yet we are still but weak men here, and unless we had a high priest who could on our side come in with help, we should still not draw nigh to God. But, blessed be His

name, if we are weak men we have a strong priest. One who can succour—beautiful word! (“Succour,” to feed, to support, to sustain those who are in weakness and temptation.)

One never tries to draw nigh to God but special hindrances are presented by the enemy, who would have us curse and not praise. There are difficulties in the family, in the business, in the assembly, on the way to the meeting, the devil is trying by every means to stop praise. Ah! but “we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”! He enables us to rise above weakness, above circumstances, and in His presence to taste of the fulness of joy that produces praise.

Thus all hindrances, all disabilities are taken away by Him who tasted death to remove them. He died to deliver us from the bondage of the fear of death, to raise us superior to all thought of imputation, that He might also deliver us as weak men here. Being then relieved of all disabilities, we may follow Him who presents us as a company of priests in the presence of God in all His perfections. We are free thus to sing with Him, to God in adoration and worship, with Him who says, “Behold I and the children whom God hath given me.”



No. III.

THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE
VOICE OF CHRIST.

(HEB. III., IV.)

THESE chapters are also in a way preliminary to the epistle, conveying an additional thought and regularly introducing the details of the subjects of the epistle.

We have had the throne of God and the apostle of our confession in chapter i., and the High Priest who has gone back to God for man in chapter ii. Now we come to the house of God upon earth, in the wilderness, in connection with which Christ exercises His apostolate and high priesthood for us at the present time. He is still giving light, although there is no fresh revelation. The end of chapter iv. carries on what was introduced at the beginning of chapter iii. "The word of God is living and operative;" this is the voice of Christ, as Apostle, by the Holy Spirit, heard in the house where also the effects of His high priesthood are known and experienced.

This thought, if apprehended, dispels from

our minds a great many educational and socialistic ideas which naturally obtain there; it also influences our conduct both in the house and in the wilderness. It is God's house and in it His voice is heard by the Holy Spirit. This is true to faith to-day, spite of the many and diverse voices that are heard in that which professes to be the house of God. "To-day if ye will hear his voice" still holds good. It is important to recognise this. We learn His mind in His house, have our own thoughts set right, and experience the sympathies and support of His Priest there.

It was God's voice that in the beginning of our experience turned us out of nature's path, making this world a wilderness to us, with no path but the one which He may mark for us and in which He leads and guides. If there were no place now where we might hear His voice, whether in private or public, we should be at a great loss. The house of God upon earth provides such a place for us, so that we may tread in peace our way, cheered by His own blessed presence.

God never gives up a thought He has once introduced as testimony of what is coming, but keeps it before the minds of His own in one form or other. The house of God is surely among those things to be permanently established and displayed in the coming day, hence it must

be existing now. It was first introduced when after the passover blood Israel sang on the banks of the Red Sea, "Jehovah is our God, and we will prepare him a habitation." This they did as directed by God Himself; they had, however, to learn that, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Eventually God brought them into the house which He built, "Thou hast guided us by thy strength into thy holy habitation." When the tabernacle waxed old the thought of the house was continued in the temple, twice rebuilt, but the same house. This failing it was taken up by Christ Himself, who could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." After His resurrection it was continued in His body, the church. In millennial days the heavenly city will answer to the house, and in the eternal state there will be a recurrence to the tabernacle of God, which will be with men. It is looked at as the same house all through, but in different stages of development, as in Haggai ii. 9, "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."

Therefore it is well to have a sense of the importance of the present aspect of God's house, as is said here,

WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE.

Mark first the dignity put upon the house

to-day. It is God's house. Christ is Son over it, all the government is in His hands, who is also Apostle and High Priest. The Spirit speaks in it and testifies the glad tidings of the rest to come, God's rest. It is a wonderful place!

Jesus is faithful to Him that appointed Him, as Moses was in all His house, a good testimony to Moses. But He is counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, His relationship to the house being very different. Moses was a part of the house, but Christ built or prepared the house. This has reference to Israel as the house. But Christ also built or arranged the "all things" as a house for God to dwell in and is Himself God. Here the universe is looked at as God's house which He will fill. This is in view in verse 4.

Moses, too, was faithful as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after, that is now. Moses, then, testified to the faithful administration of God's rule and order in His house to-day by the Son. Here Christians are the house. Blessed position! How much better is the government of God's house to-day in the hands of the Son, when thus recognised, than in Moses' hands, who, blessed man as he was, the meekest in all the earth, yet "sinned with his lips." Blessed be His name, there is no failure in Christ in any way, whereas every other servant has failed.

The chief object of the house is that God might dwell among His people. This necessitates government and priesthood, or there could be no dwelling under present circumstances, and no getting through the wilderness. The house is set forth provisionally here, therefore there is an "if." Looking forward we may see that the thought of the house, whether as the millennial city or the tabernacle of God in the eternal state, is fulfilled in the true saints of the present period, that is, those who have proved themselves true in the wilderness state. Hence "If we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." This shews that only those who come right through to the end really compose the house. There is, however, a profession, and this is looked at here. In other scriptures it is likened to a great house and will come under judgment. Now God dwells in this house and the Spirit raises a warning voice there. To refuse the voice of the Spirit thus raised is to refuse Christ and with an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living God.

Of old they erred in their hearts and did not know God's ways. How few know His ways, or even care to know them! Moses prayed, "Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight." And "He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the

children of Israel." Yet Moses failed, and it is important to perceive the principle of his failure that we may escape it. He was told to take "the rod," which was Aaron's, the priestly rod, and to speak to the rock. He certainly took that rod, but he took also his own, the symbol of government, and smote the rock twice, saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" That is to say, both he and Aaron abandoned priesthood, figuratively, for government, and government alone could never bring the people into the land. For this they did not themselves go in.

Now we are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; both these functions are in the hands of Christ, the Son, and are exercised on behalf of (or for) the house of God. Do we, beloved, believe there is such a house upon earth to-day? Do we consider Him who exercises the functions so necessary to bring us through and to bring us in spirit into the rest of God? Do we sufficiently consider the bearing of the two distinct functions and that it is impossible to separate them? Only thus can we be kept, faith alone triumphs here. A daily exhortation to this effect, while it is called to-day, may save from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made

But this again, "If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." The word here used for companions (ver. 14) is the same as that used in chapter i. 9 and chapter ii. 1. These three scriptures give the position. Some will be companions of His joy and glory in the coming day; namely, they who have been companions of the heavenly calling in the wilderness and also His companions in the priesthood. Here the "if" occurs again, and like all the "ifs" applies to the wilderness. Only true men will hold fast and become the priesthood of the universe in glory, and consequently only such are the companions of the Christ now. It is thought a great thing by the world to be a Companion of the Bath or Garter, worldly distinctions conferred on its honourable men. How much better to be a companion of the heavenly calling in the wilderness and a companion of the Christ! It gives us to see that our portion is not here though our pathway is, and at the same time it puts a dignity upon us in the pathway that none of the sons of men can boast.

Believers are not left here to do the best they can for themselves until they come into their portion, for in the wilderness God numbers the hairs of their heads. At the same time there is a place on earth where He, around whom they shall throng and whose companions they will be

manifestly in glory, can minister to them their true heavenly portion even now.

To a certain extent 1 Peter ii. 4-10 is a parallel scripture to this in Hebrews ii. In each believers are looked at as both the house and the priesthood. In Peter it is the spiritual house and the holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices. There all is real, for Peter takes it directly from Matthew xvi., where Christ builds His church. Here it is profession, hence the "ifs," but even here we are both the house and Christ's companions in it.

Thus the position is laid down as to privilege, with a solemn warning as to the responsibilities attaching thereto. But while this is so the apostle seeks to press home on the conscience that these privileges are true to faith only at the present time, though they will eventuate in glorious actuality. For it is evident that the great thought is that believers are not yet in the land actually, but

IN THE WILDERNESS.

Now the wilderness is a place of drought and dearth where everything is against them and where their only resource is in God. Therefore they are warned not to harden their heart as in the day of provocation, after the manner of "them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." The wilderness journey is right,

we can only enter the land through it. To say we are not in the wilderness at all is foolishness. There are here two positions true for all believers, but not for the same moment: the wilderness and the house. In the house we may enter in spirit into the rest, though not yet actually there. A man who does not know the wilderness will not know the house to-day, nor the rest, even in spirit.

The children of Israel in their tribes in Numbers were all related to the tabernacle when it was on march or when it was set up. When moving, the priests marched as well as the others, their experience then was a wilderness experience. When a halt was called and the tabernacle was set up, the priests went into the house, there they had a different experience. Settling down and building fine houses here is no part of true wilderness experience as God intends it for us. It is not accepting the wilderness. The wilderness is a place where there is no resource but God, a place where a wily enemy lays snares to catch the heart in his toils. Hence in the wilderness of old they tempted God, provoked Him, erred in their hearts, they sinned, so all that came out of Egypt by Moses fell save Joshua and Caleb. But worse than all else was unbelief; it was that which kept them out of the land. God swore in His wrath that those which believed

not should not enter into His rest. So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief!

Caleb and Joshua were men of faith and their experience was true wilderness experience, while, on the other hand, they tasted by faith of the joys of the land as they had seen it. How different to those who brought up an evil report of the land! The wilderness is in one sense a very dreadful place. Moses reminds them how God led them through that great and terrible wilderness. If all the difficulties, oppositions and failures which go to make up the complement of our pathway here were put before us in their totality, together with our own utterly treacherous hearts, it would stagger us. But it is a great thing to remember that God knows all, and is equal to all that may befall each and every one of His beloved people in the wilderness. But for all who are of faith the wilderness leads surely to

GOD'S REST.

After all these events, Creation's rest, the rest of the land, the rest of the kingdom, the voice of the Spirit still proclaims the promise of entering into His rest. We may well fear lest we should seem to come short of it. God having promised, it remains that some must be the better of His promise, some must enjoy its fulfilment. The rest, like the house, is something to come, and

has also been a subject of testimony, but over a much longer period. Four rests are referred to here.

(1) Rest was proposed first of all in creation. God laboured six days, and on the seventh He rested from all His works. Man was brought into that rest in a provisional way and put at the head of all things on earth. Here, alas! he sinned and lost his position, breaking up also that rest entirely. (2) Joshua would have brought them into the rest of the land after the deliverances of Egypt and the wilderness; this was in connection with God's promise according to His purpose as set forth in creation. But the people entered not in because of unbelief, and although the second generation did enter the land provisionally on the ground of obedience, yet unbelief hindered them attaining the rest which Joshua would have brought them into under the captain of the Lord's host. Of which host morally they, alas! proved themselves not to be. (3) David next takes up the testimony and applies the promise to his day, proving that Joshua had not given them rest. But again, David could not bring them into rest, the rest of the kingdom. If sin broke up the first rest and unbelief hindered the entrance into the second, rebellion soon dissipated any appearance of rest under the King. The Jews were under the Roman yoke when the apostle wrote, and not

under their Messiah, of whom David was a type and whom they had rejected.

Still the promise of rest had been made, and as yet it is fulfilled in no people. Is God's promise to lapse? Shall it fail for lack of a people to enter it? Ah! no. God's rest remains. It is for a people created by God for it. A people characterised by faith, to whom it is first presented as testimony and who prove themselves to be men of faith by anticipating the fulfilment of the promise even in the wilderness. God is well able to bring us in. This is the language of faith. Neither sin nor unbelief nor rebellion shall break up God's rest. He will rest in His love, He will rejoice over His own with singing. We which have believed are entering into His rest.

The gospel of this rest is preached still to-day by the voice of the Spirit in the house, shewing it lies yet in the future. To them of old it did not profit, as they had no faith to mix with the word preached. Faith is the great characteristic of those who enter into that rest. Faith accepts the testimony of the Spirit as to the rest, and labours to enter into it. Faith keeps us in the ranks of the host of the Lord. Faith makes us labour, faith anticipates the rest. But faith and anticipation and labour are not God's rest. There faith is changed to sight, hope to fruition, labour to rest. Rest from *good* works, the bad

have ceased long ago for faith. No gospel preaching, no feeding the hungry, no visiting and sympathising with the sick then. There all is rest. God's rest. Rest after labour. This, this awaits us!

But all this only emphasises the fact that we are still in the wilderness and everything is against us here. Satan, too, is seeking to frustrate God's thoughts and purposes for us. We must therefore be diligent lest we fall after the same example of not hearkening to the word. This word for us is heard in the house, and turning, as we do, with alternating experience, to that place for guidance and help, we hear the voice of

THE APOSTLE OF OUR CONFESSION.

He confronts us though in grace with the unerring word of God. There we are privileged to listen to the voice of Christ brought home to us in the power of the Spirit, opening up God's mind to us. If the thoughts of our hearts are right, flowing from the Spirit in us, they are confirmed and we are comforted.

But how often we come with the heart full of thoughts which are the outcome of our affections and with certain intention of carrying out that which would be a manifestation of self and not the Spirit. Though mistaken, our state and desire being right, we soon find out

whether we are filled with right or wrong thoughts. The Apostle of our confession, with the rod of government in His hand, will not lower the standard to make a compromise, nor accommodate the truth to us, nor allow us to do as we intend. The word of God is living and operative, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Everything that is sensuous, all that appeals to a man's soul or natural affections is discerned and disowned. Only that which is of the Spirit passes muster there. The word of God is such a keen discernor as to judge between soul and spirit, happy moods, pleasing associations and the like, all judged and disallowed, for omniscience is exercised in judging by the living word of the apostle in the house.

All this may, as it were, turn us inside out, exposing to ourselves our folly and weakness. Intending to act in a certain way beforehand, the word of God heard in the house, which is the voice of Christ by whomsoever spoken, has exposed the wrong of such a course, and thus the weakness has been brought out. Now the opposite course is pursued, deliverance is effected, and the conscience and heart are at rest. The subject heart is always ready to reverse its judgment upon any true testimony from God. There is nothing that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened to

the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is well we should remember this and be ready to yield to Him. But if we will do wrong, God will obstruct our way, for He loves us too well to allow us to tread a wilful path.

This it is evident was the case in the example referred to in verse 11, where the Israelites first refused to go up into the land when told by God through Moses to go. (See Num. xiv. and Deut. i.) In these cases they did not give up their own thoughts and the results were disastrous. It is an example for us.

The wilderness thus being a difficult place for us, everything in it tending to draw us aside, the Apostle of our confession also making no allowance nor compromise with our wrong thoughts, but exposing us to ourselves, Satan takes occasion of these things to suggest that we had better give it all up and go back. He may say to a self-exposed soul, You know you are only a hypocrite and every one else knows it. But, ah! No; do not give up, rather hold fast the confession. If exposed by the word of God one needs now the help of the same blessed One who has thus exposed us, and who exercises in the house other functions than those of Apostle. Now He takes occasion of the felt weakness and comes forward as

THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.

In the closing verses of chapter iv. we have

set over against the wilderness and the word of God the priesthood and the throne of grace. With these we may "hold fast." First the power side of the priesthood is presented. Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, let us hold fast our confession. As the priest of old passed through the holy places, so Jesus the Son of God has passed through the heavens and has taken His seat at the right hand of power, there to represent us in all His own perfections at all times. Thence, too, He is able to apply to us the power which is in His hand as we pass on in weakness.

The fact of the glory of His Person and the perfection of His work which has put Him as a Man in the place of acceptance for those whom He represents opens up to us what approach to God is. It is equal to the revelation God has made of Himself. Looking at ourselves we should not draw nigh, but considering the great High Priest we have no other place to turn to than that in which He represents us. He comes to us in order to support us in our weakness and to encourage us to approach to God.

We need, however, more than representation and power, or we should soon fail or give up; we need a heart of love and sympathy, and this, too, we have in our blessed Priest. The full sympathy of a heart that has been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart, is there.

No taint of sin was in Him, nor can He sympathise with sin. Who would wish that He should? Neither, indeed, should we need a priest had we sinned. The same blessed Person would then as an Advocate meet our need, but that is not the subject here. The Priest is for weakness, infirmity, for the tried, the tempted; for those in danger of being led aside to do their own will, to listen to Satan's suggestion, to give all up; to enable those who suffer thus to "hold fast their confession." To suffer being tempted is to ensure the support of the Priest who suffered being tempted, whose heart is full of sympathy with the suffering ones.

He is not in the place of suffering now, but he learned when in that place how to sympathise. In the place of power He supports those who are in danger. His lips keep knowledge and He can apply it to our circumstances. The place where His own need was met is open to us. As He stood always in divine favour so has He secured for us a similar place. The object of His priesthood is that we may avail ourselves of the place He has obtained for us. A wonderful place! It is not here called the mercy-seat, though doubtless the same place is in view; but the believer to-day stands in a very different relationship to God to that which the Jew held and God presents a very different aspect towards him. Our great High Priest,

Jesus the Son of God, encourages us to approach with boldness

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

This forms, with the priesthood, the *second* thing that is set over against the wilderness and the word of God. Throne suggests supremacy, and grace is divine favour. Everything is in grace here. The word of God is in grace. Though it searches us, it makes us feel the need of grace. But grace is supreme and nothing is administered from that throne but grace.

That which makes the mercy-seat a throne of grace is the work of Christ. The Christian comes for help to the throne of grace and sees Christ the accepted Man upon that throne. His one sacrifice has for ever satisfied the claims of God and meets the continuous need of man. He comes to a place where Man is in divine favour, and though recognising that for himself it is not only unmerited but demerited favour, yet he comes boldly because Christ is in acceptance there, and he obtains mercy for the special need that brings him to that place. Mercy supposes weakness, infirmity, is not for failure, but for that which needs strengthening and sustaining.

There are two words used for mercy. One, as in the case of the publican, who prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner," has the idea of propitiation in it, "God be propitiated to me." The other, used by the blind man, "Jesus, thou

Son of David, have mercy upon me," expresses the sympathy, help, relief from the pressure of the blindness he asked for. The latter word is used here. Mercy, in the first sense, is for the sinner as he approaches the mercy-seat: in the second sense, for the Christian as he draws nigh to the throne of grace. Both are set forth in type in the ark described in Exodus xxv.

Not only does the one who thus draws nigh obtain mercy at that place where everything is taken into consideration, he also finds grace, which flows continuously from this throne for seasonable help; he gets strengthened for future trials and perplexities. Every time we avail ourselves of this blessed provision, we obtain the victory, and every victory strengthens us for what may be before us; so that it has not only a present and momentary, but also a permanent effect upon all our earthly pathway.

Note here, the Priest does not draw nigh to the throne of grace for us, but encourages us to do so.

LET US APPROACH THEREFORE WITH BOLDNESS.

Now the great subjects of the epistle are fully introduced; they are those of priesthood and approach. The word "approach" occurs seven* times in the epistle, though variously translated,

* Chapters iv. 16; vii. 25; x. 1, 22; xi. 6; xii. 18, 22. Another word is also used twice in chapters vii. 19; x. 25.

and once in the negative. It is the epistle of approach. God would have a people who can draw nigh to Him. This is the first occurrence of the word, and it is to be noted that here we are invited to approach in order to obtain, while in chapter x. we *approach to give*. Here the wilderness priest succours us that we may reach the throne of grace and be relieved of all that which in our wilderness experience would press upon our spirits and hinder praise, the great object in drawing nigh to God. In chapter x. the sanctuary priest leads those who have conquered in the wilderness, into the holiest, that they may give to God the worship in which He delights. We cannot go into the holiest to give if we have not been to the throne of grace to obtain, for, like David, we must ever say, "Of thine own we give unto thee, O God."

With many the thought of the priesthood of Christ is confined to the wilderness side, but blessed as this is, and we cannot do without it, it is but a means to an end. Christ, as wilderness priest, will lift every weight from the heart, as His blood has settled every question that could affect the conscience, if we will but follow Him, when, as sanctuary priest, He presents Himself before God, saying, Behold I and the children whom God hath given Me. May God enable us more fully to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.