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**Brief Notes of Address at
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READ 1 CORINTHIANS III. 10-13.

MATTHEW IV. 1-11.

DANIEL II., III.

You will gather from the scriptures I have read what is before me in seeking to address you at this time. There are two great systems brought before us in them: one patent—seen—spoken of in 1 Corinthians as “things which are;” the other, unseen—“things which are not” as far as this world goes. The first is under a head, a god, “the god of this age,” and he is making everything in his system subservient to the glory of man. He has laid hold of everything, even of what is divine, to add adornment to that world. He has conferred upon the nations a glory which is truly magnificent, and though he takes up and misappropriates what is divine for his system, he will not disdain to use even a “spirit of Python” in his service, as we see on the entrance of the testimony into Europe, where a damsel

indwelt by this spirit cries after the apostles, "these be the servants of the most high God, which shew unto you the way of salvation." Man is blinded by the magnificence of the religious world which Satan has brought into being. The material upon which he has wrought has been very facile in his hands, very plastic; the mind of man has proved itself ever ready to take up anything which will advance his glory, regardless of the glory of God.

Now God intervened in the death of Christ, and He has wholly discarded the mind of man. What He takes up as suitable to His system is absolutely different in character, being heavenly in order; it is "Jesus Christ." He is Man of an entirely different order to fallen man; He is Himself the affirmation on God's part of all that man has negated. Man, as man, has given God the lie, but Jesus Christ held firmly, unflinchingly to what was of God, where man, where favoured Israel had failed.

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I read Matthew iv. that we might gain some sense of the character of the Man upon whom God is erecting His structure, that building of God which is to endure right down the ages.

God's Son come into manhood is here about to come face to face with the enemy. It is remarkable that it is the Spirit who leads Him up into the wilderness. He steps there into the place of Israel. The history of Israel hinges on the wilderness, the temple and the kingdom: they were tested in regard of each, and in each test Israel had miserably failed. Now the tempter meets Jesus in each of these positions. In regard to the wilderness he says, "Command that these stones be made bread." Men had divorced the very mercies of God from the God who gave them. In 1 Corinthians x. we see how on five occasions in the wilderness Israel denied God His rights. God had attested His ability to provide bread for them; He was sufficient for the whole wilderness journey. Thus to have created bread would have been to deny God His right to provide it.

Next we see Jesus taken by the Devil—in each instance, save one, spoken of under this title—into the "holy city." We might not have thought of it as the "holy city," but viewed from the divine standpoint and in God's thought it is still the "holy city." There He is set upon a pinnacle of the temple, and the devil says, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is

written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee : and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." But the answer of Christ is "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The attempt of the enemy was to connect the temple with human glory. Had Messiah taken a superhuman flight from the pinnacle of the temple, it would have meant the display of what man could have approved; He would have embellished the temple of God with a human lustre ; it would have been an appeal to man in the flesh. Israel had failed utterly in regard to this ; the glory of God's temple had been attached to themselves ; everything had been brought down to a human level, to a level which would suit man in the flesh. So much was this the case that Christ could say when here, "Ye have made it a den of thieves." He would connect nothing with God's temple but what was divine.

Now as to the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. The devil had been put in the place of the covering cherub (Ezek. xxviii.); he had in that way been placed of God in the position of cover, under the divine eye, to the whole universe, and that he might in it radiate the glory of God. We all know how he acted in regard to this place :

how his heart became lifted up because of his beauty, and how he used the glory of God for his own adornment. Now here, he has the effrontery to present the kingdoms of the world and to offer their sullied, defiled glory to the Son of God. And on what terms? "If, falling down, thou wilt worship *me*." Then the Lord unmask him; He names him: "Get thee hence, *Satan*."

It is noteworthy that in the Epistle to the Corinthians, he is designated Satan throughout; he is the rival prince in an opposing system of glory. He is the false Head of man. Will Jesus do him homage? He utterly refuses him, and the angels come and minister to Him. God's angels come to uphold the pathway of that blessed Man out of heaven, Jesus Christ. God can associate His glory and His light with that Man as One who can uphold the glory of His temple.

Thus Paul can state "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He laid Jesus Christ as foundation. He, as the wise architect, had received from Christ in glory the whole system of glory. He had seen it in pattern. It is not quite the same thought as the heavenly city; that was more given to the twelve; but it is the system of glory in the Pauline aspect of it.

One word I would say : let us disabuse our minds of any material thought as to building. The idea is wholly moral. As to the architect, he is one who has the completed plan before him ere one stone is laid in the building. Paul had the plan presented to him when Jesus challenged him on the road to Damascus : " Why persecutest thou *me* ? " That covers the divine structure. Paul knew what the completion was to be of what he had begun ; so at the end of this epistle he can say to them, If you question my genuineness, " since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, . . . examine *yourselves*, . . . know ye not your own selves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates ?"—except ye be spurious. If you are genuine, the mark will be that right through your souls, from foundation to topstone there is the building in of that Man—Jesus Christ. He who withstood here every proffer of the enemy, unassailable to the glory of this world, He is to govern and carry our affections through and through.

The Corinthians had built in much else ; Satan had seduced them into building in much that, though originally divine in character, had received from him a human impress, resulting in much there that would not stand the test of fire. What we have

to do with is a resurrection sphere, a world in which the power of resurrection is known, and we cannot tell what will stand that power except as we have light from God. Man, naturally, is wholly ignorant of the powers of that sphere, and of what will stand the test of resurrection.

Now when the apostle speaks of Jesus Christ as the foundation, he uses no figure; Jesus Christ is a divine Person come into manhood; He is the second Man "out of heaven;" He it is who gives character to the whole building of God. Our minds are so prone to lay hold on divine thoughts, and to turn them to account for our own aggrandisement; we adorn ourselves with gold, with silver, with precious stones—so to speak—but the perfection of Jesus Christ is seen in this, that He makes all glory centre in God.

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Now I pass on to the Book of Daniel as illustrating the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The position in Daniel is a peculiar one; it follows the failure of Israel in regard to the test of the kingdom. The kingdom had been inaugurated by God, and placed in the hands of Israel, that His rights might be maintained here. But at the close of this

period we find the fearful failure of Zedekiah in upholding the glory of God. He had sworn in the holy name of Jehovah, but he had broken his oath (2 Chron. xxxvi. 13; Ezek. xvii. 18, 19), and heaven is incensed at his profanity. He is spoken of as "thou profane wicked prince," and God takes away the right to the diadem, until He shall arise "whose right it is," until that One comes who will perfectly uphold the glorious name of Jehovah. (See Ezek. xxi. 25-27.)

Israel having failed, God constitutes Babylon the first great world empire. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, but he loses it; he cannot recall it; it is recalled by Daniel, who interprets it to him. He is shown the divine thought of empire; "thou art this head of gold"—the head of empire was set up in divine magnificence as contributory to the glory of God. Even then, warning is given to Nebuchadnezzar of the deterioration that would ensue in that which was committed to man's hands. We must not forget that we come under the fourth and last phase of empire, the Roman Empire; but the end of it all is that it is broken to pieces together, and becomes like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

The divine thought is "thou art this head of gold," and Nebuchadnezzar took it up,

and with what result? He will attach the divine glory to himself. He makes an image of gold and sets it up in the plains of Dura. The image he made was human in conception, human in its carrying out; it is a marvellous picture of this present age in its completeness. Now, what was this image for? It was to exalt man; it commanded universal subjection, and the decree went forth by a herald. Do we know the music of empire? The wooing of this world? Do we know how the glory of this world steals the hearts of God's saints from Him? But there is God's music, too; there is the music of God's empire; and it centres in Christ. There is the symphony of heaven, and it has but one theme—Jesus Christ. Do our hearts dance to the music of heaven? Do we respond to the name of Jesus Christ?

What is so encouraging in the book of Daniel is that we find that God preserved for Himself, in spite of the failure of man, a godly remnant in which all that was due to Himself should be unflinchingly maintained. Holiness marked them; they were apart from all that would have ministered to them here. They refused the king's table; his wine and his meat had no attraction for them; but when the test comes they are

found fairer and fatter than those who accommodate themselves to the king's command. The fact is they were feeding on the fatness of God's house; they were divinely nourished.

Now if there were those who could take up a position of separation, there was bound to be a moment of testing; the test of fire—the “burning fiery furnace.” They refuse to bow down to the god of empire, and they are accused to the king, and he questions them. Could they stand apart from the universal glory? Scripture records for us the answer of these three men—Daniel is not with them here—it is very simple: “we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Why were they not careful? Because they knew that the great King Emperor, Christ, was greater than any king He had appointed. So we have here on the one hand the greatest emperor of the world, and on the other three poor children of the captivity, but *God* with them. All the strength of man's empire is engaged in binding them, and they fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, but the fire tested all things. God was behind that fire. The power of resurrection lay behind it, and it began to operate. The connection between resurrection and fire is

very marked in scripture. To give but one instance, we have the burning bush; God shews His ability to carry His people through in the power of resurrection. So here, the test of fire begins to operate, and all that is of God withstands the test, but all the glory of man withered in one moment; the flower of the empire is consumed—God had taken that fire in hand. Only one moment more and things were entirely altered—Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste. He says, “Did not we cast three men bound into the fire? . . . Lo, I see four men loose . . . and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” The fire had done its work; the fire had tested; it had approved that which was of God; it had burnt up what was spurious. What was built into the souls of those three men was Jesus Christ, anticipatively, and He identifies Himself with them; He walks with them in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then further on we find the attestation of the power of resurrection throughout the whole empire of Nebuchadnezzar; the princes and governors and captains and the king’s counsellors are gathered together and they see these men come forth, not a hair of whose head was singed, neither their coats

changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Is not that a warning to us not to accept material thoughts in regard to God's test of fire? What would have succumbed more quickly in the test than hair or clothing? Yet they are preserved in every particular. They yielded their bodies, choosing martyrdom rather than belie the rights of God; and the king's word was changed.

This gives us a living illustration of how God will test the building as Corinthians presents it. God has His temple here that His glory may be connected with it. Every whit in that temple utters glory—it speaks of His glory. Christianity puts no glory on us; all glory belongs to God, and if we should seek to make glory for ourselves out of any divine thought, it will not stand. Whatever is built into God's building must be of the same character as the foundation. God's building is one in character. May no element of the man that God has judged come into our souls and mar the work of Jesus Christ there. It will be a great surprise, I believe, to many of us, in the day of testing, to see what will abide then. All that comes through the test will abide for eternity. It is of the same character as that which withstood the temptations of Satan;

that which stood the testing of the Cross, where all that was of man was exposed and judged. Jesus Christ could exhaust the judgment of the cross, He could survive it; and that abides in present value for the saints, as "gold tried in the fire." We find that gold in the blessed Person of the One who is the foundation of the apostolic structure—Jesus Christ.

