

**“ MY ✎ ✎
BRETHREN.”**

**Notes of Lecture by
✎ P. R. MORFORD ✎
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2 CHRON. XXVI.; ISA. VI.; JOHN XX. 15-23; HEB. II. 9-11.

I HAVE read these scriptures in the Old Testament more by way of contrast than of comparison with those in the New Testament. We may learn much from the contrasts in scripture. I will begin by drawing your attention to the two principal scriptures in Isaiah and John: in each the scene is centred in the Lord Jesus Christ; and in each the question is one of holiness, and the way it is brought about if others are to be with Him. To develop the latter thought is particularly before me, so that we may learn the true character of those whom He qualifies to occupy ground with Himself as the risen Man before God. This will lead us to dwell on the formative work of the Spirit by which His brethren are fitted for association with Him.

In Isaiah vi. Jehovah of hosts (Lord of the armies of heaven) is presented, and we learn from John xii. 41 that the Lord of hosts is Jesus, He whom we know as our Lord Jesus Christ: “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” In Isaiah the name of the sinner upon the

throne is Adonai, though it is the holiness of Jehovah of hosts that is celebrated. I dwell on this to shew the teaching and moral bearing of the scene, because I desire to press the moral side of the truth. What marks that scene is holiness; it is the celebration of holiness. Cherubim are angelic executors of God's judgment, but seraphim, or burning ones, are the celebrators of God's holiness; and here of the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, viewed anticipatively as Man. They have six wings; with twain they cover their faces, with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they fly. The same power that carries them forward in service, leads them to veil their faces and their feet before the holiness of the throne. They veil their faces, for they are in the presence of supreme holiness; and their feet, for *their* activities are not in evidence; they are but "ministers of *his* that do his pleasure," "his ministers a flaming fire."

In John xx. we find the contrast. The Lord Jesus is again the centre, now as Man risen from the dead; the atmosphere is one of peace, and there is a holy company who are seen to be His brethren, a holy company who do not veil their faces.

Now Isaiah vi. opens with a date, it is a

moral date: "In the year that king Uzziah died." We shall see the reason for this in a moment. The majesty of the scene here depicted and the serenity of its holy calm seems to have been in a measure affected by something that had taken place on earth. The throne was "high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," but the "posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." This supposes that disturbance had come in calling for judgment, for the posts of the door moving and the house being filled with smoke present to us the thought that judgment was invited, there was that which invited the judgment of holiness.

Now what had happened upon earth was this: a certain king, Uzziah by name, had been helped of God, he had held things for God in measure, He was a man of immense power, great and ingenious, a fighting man, one who had waged the wars of the Lord. He was in every way a fitted man for the position he occupied as king of Judah, and the Lord helped him marvellously "till he was strong." Then came the collapse. Here was one no doubt dependent upon the Lord, owning Him in some measure, and yet the moment came when he sought to take up a position before the Lord which

was not his. He sought to take up the priestly position without the moral qualifications for it. The divinely formed fitness for it in lineage and holiness was wanting in Uzziah; the place of priesthood appertained not to him. In the Old Testament things were set forth in type and symbol; certain classes of men were selected to set forth divine thoughts, and certain privileges and responsibilities attached to them as such, but in Christianity all these things are inwrought by the Spirit of God; there is no special priestly class to-day; it is the privilege of all Christians. It is not only outward and positional holiness, but the blessed result of divine operation *within* which fits a man for approach to God. Uzziah aspired to go into the temple to burn incense, but he wholly exposed himself; and we may learn from this that to take up a priestly place without moral equipment for it is wholly obnoxious to God. Priestly discernment exposed what was there in Uzziah; the sons of Aaron were there as appointed by the Lord, such as were divinely appointed and divinely equipped for His service, and they came forward and thrust him out; "yea, he himself hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." Human ability has no place with God; you

may get men extremely able and clever in this world, good business men, men of invention and mark in human affairs, but all such have no place in the holiness of God's temple.

Now this it was, I think, that caused the movement we have spoken of in the scene portrayed in Isaiah vi. The Spirit chronicles that it was in the year that King Uzziah died.

In John xx. we find the Lord Jesus in resurrection appearing to Mary. The will and work of the Father was accomplished; He had been into death, and now in resurrection He comes and appears to Mary. She had great affection for Him; she was weeping beside His tomb, but she did not know Him in resurrection. Many true saints of God are in the same state of soul; they mourn His absence, and they cleave to His Person, but they need the divine touch that will bring them into the light and power of resurrection. The Lord is prepared to lead them on. He makes Himself known personally to Mary; He pronounces her name in resurrection; He reveals Himself to her, and in that way wipes away for ever her tears. Nothing can effectually wipe away our tears but the knowledge of Christ Himself in

resurrection. The heart is never satisfied until it sees Him thus.

Mary would have taken Him up on the old ground; she would have held Him by the feet. But He says in effect: No, do not do that; that is past; the old relationships have been terminated, and I am bringing in new relationships which can never pass away. He has brought to pass in resurrection a new platform where we can be associated with Him outside all question of sin and death. "Go to my brethren!" Yes, that was their new name; they are now akin to Himself—His *brethren*.

What a contrast to the scene in Isaiah vi. Here in John xx. we find those who are akin to the One who is the centre and sun of that resurrection scene. They are akin to Him in nature; they are the sanctified ones. How else could He speak of them as His "brethren"? The truth of God could have nothing unreal in the saints. The holiness of God could abide no disparity in those who are the associates of the risen Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God working in the souls of His people would effect what is real—substantive—effective; they are akin to the Sanctifier; they are of His order.

This is the climax of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in the Gospel of John. If we take the first chapter we read, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God.*" They are "born of God"; it is in that way that God effects a beginning for Himself. Unlike the seraphim, the "burning ones" of the Old Testament economy, the celebrators of holiness in Christianity, are those who are akin to the Holy One.

If we look at those taken up in John's gospel as the subjects of the divine work, we shall find that they are naturally most unpromising material. Nothing marked them out in the flesh as fit subjects for God's workmanship. In chapter iii. we have Nicodemus; he was a great man truly, a ruler of the Jews; but he was a coward. He came to Jesus "by night." Nothing to be proud of there; yet when the work of God has taken effect in him he is delivered from the fear of man.

Take chapter iv.: a poor sinful woman, living in sin, yet unsatisfied in heart. The Lord takes her up; He will give her that living water by which she will "never thirst

for ever." But there is nothing to boast of in her. It is all the Lord's work, what He did, and what He will still accomplish by the power of the Spirit.

In chapter v. we get a man for thirty-eight years unable to move, and the Lord heals him. Yet, though the recipient of healing mercy, he turns informant to the Jews, and departs from Jesus to tell them who had healed him. That was a most heartless kind of proceeding. If we look at the subjects of divine work, we can find nothing but disappointment as to any fair show in the flesh.

In chapter viii. we get a woman taken in adultery, and in chapter ix. a blind beggar; there is nothing very capable or admirable after the flesh about a blind beggar. And then we reach the crowning touch in chapter xi., where the divine work takes effect in a man who not only had died, but who had gone to corruption. The power of divine quickening in the Son of God can deal not only with death itself, but with its fruit—corruption. Now we see in these examples given us in the Gospel of John the kind of material which God works upon; He takes up such persons as we have considered—a coward, a woman living in sin, a traitor, an adulteress, a blind beggar, and a dead man—

and in them He begins to work in sovereign power.

What can be the divine remedy for such as these? What is the divine remedy for us? Exactly the same as we see in Isaiah vi. 12. God will remove men "*far away*." That is it. Not the good man, or the bad man, but God will remove *men* far away. Do we believe that? That is the divine remedy. At the close of John's gospel we read, "They crucified him, and *two other* with him." Why does it not add "thieves" or "malefactors"? It could not make it worse. Who were they? What were they? They were men, that is all. It would not have made it more serious if it had said two malefactors, so all that is chronicled is that with Him there were crucified two other.

Now the only way in which a sanctified company can be brought about for God is by the removal of man far away. We must start there; there is the entire removal from before God of man in the flesh. The Gospel of John starts with that as a basis, for it begins with the type of the brazen serpent, carrying us back in thought to the fall of *man* through the serpent, and forward to Christ, the Son of man, lifted up. So, too, it starts with the rejection of Christ, the only Man who was for God; the only begotten

Son who is in the bosom of the Father; the One who had come here to reveal the Father is rejected of men. Man refuses Him. Well in the midst of all that darkness the Father works and the Son works. They work there in quickening power in the scene of death and moral darkness, and they operate to quicken dead souls and make them live Godward. They work to implant new and divine affections in the souls of men so that they may live and breathe towards God. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them: even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." If you hear His word and it takes effect in you, you will be made alive towards God.

First He brings to them the living water; then He quickens them in divine life and affection; then they get Him as God's bread come down out of heaven, and they live on account of Him. Then, having drunk from Him, they are graced with rivers of living water which flow out from them, and they are led into the light of life. They see His works of power and are made to see the culmination of His blessed work for them. In chapter ix. man casts out the subject of

His work, but chapter x. reveals that it is His leading out; the two things go on at the same moment. The very fact of there being a work of God in their souls results in the world casting them out, and because of that very fact Christ leads them out; He appropriates the divine work. And where does He lead them? Into salvation. He leads them into a large place, on to resurrection ground; so that they go in with Christ and go out with Him; as He says, "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." He leads us thus through the resurrection gates into the place of liberty and life and divine affections and intimacy. Then in chapter xiii. we see how He washes their feet so that they may be maintained in suitability to the position of life and intimacy into which He has brought them.

Now the Lord Jesus is not here now in that way, but the Holy Ghost is here; He has been sent by Christ from the Father. The Holy Ghost is here to quicken the saints, to form them in the divine nature so that they may become practically and actually the companions of Christ—"My brethren." So that they may be here in the knowledge of association with Him, practically in accord with Him, formed and fashioned according

to Himself, formed to appreciate the light of the blessed ground of resurrection which is theirs with Him. No one can really apprehend the light of the resurrection platform except as fitted by the work of the Spirit for it. There is nothing unreal as to it; but the heart lives and moves in the light of it by the work of the Spirit. There is divine operation with regard to me, and I live not now in regard to the old associations and relationships, but as brought into the good of the place of the brethren of Christ. This is the result of the divine work, of which the saints are individually the subjects.

In Hebrews ii. we see Jesus "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." He was the only Man here upon earth upon whom death had no claim. As a divine Person He was outside all question of death, and even as Man death had no claim on Him, yet He became Man, He took up human life, that He might die. He came here for "the suffering of death," that by this means He might remove men far away for ever. He, the sinless One, would pass down into death in order that in Him, upon whom death had no claim, that order of man might be closed up for ever. He "tasted death for every man." If God was going to

bring in a new scene under His eye, He must first sweep away the old. And He clears the scene of the old in the very Man who is going to fill the new and eternal scene. The One who in tasting death for every man closes up the old scene, is the One who alone is fitted to occupy the new ground which is brought in on the other side of death. It is this we are brought to in Christianity. God has brought about a new scene, and He will fill it with what is of Himself. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one.

Think of the contrast to what we have noticed in regard to Uzziah. There was no divine work there, no formative work of the Spirit, because the Spirit had not then come; and there was, too, the barrier of conferred priestly privilege to shut Uzziah out from the presence of God. Now in contrast to all that we find garments of beauty, washings of water by the word, and divine activities in constant exercise to fit us for our place of association with Christ before the Father, but all as the result of the work of the Holy Ghost. He produces the priestly garments *in* the saints, and He produces the holiness that was set forth in outward purifications and washings, by His own operations within. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are

all of one. The One who wrought in John's gospel in sovereign power—the Sanctifier—and the blessed subjects of that work, the sanctified ones, are all of one; they are akin, "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

In Isaiah vi. it is the seraphim who celebrate the holiness of the Sitter upon the throne, but to-day those who celebrate that holiness are the saints, the holy ones. They are in full accord with the necessity for their removal far away; and they are the subjects of the work of the Spirit in quickening power, so that in life and affection they live with Christ before the face of the Father. They are there as "sons with him, who is above," and in virtue of their kinship with Him by the divine work they are constituted the sanctified company. As such, they do not need to veil their faces, but they are in full accord with the holiness of the resurrection scene; they delight in the celebration of holiness. Then their activities are all regulated by the light of holiness, and they are suited messengers for the divine pleasure. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, because He recognises in them the divine work; He recognises them as akin to Himself.

In John xx. He salutes that company on resurrection ground with the word "Peace." That is what He has brought in. There is no movement of the posts of the doors, nor is the house filled with smoke, but there is peace; He has brought about a position of peace, a sphere of peace into which no disturbing element can ever intrude. Every element of discord and disturbance has been for ever silenced in His death, and in resurrection He has brought about a sphere of peace where He can salute His brethren as those akin to Him.

This is what we specially realise through the supper as come together in assembly. It is there that we certify our removal far away in His death, but where we can take account of the divine work as bringing us into conscious association with Him in life. In that way this record of the first occasion of their coming together becomes pattern of every time we assemble; we come into the abiding sense of peace into which He can conduct our souls as the sanctified ones in association with Himself, the Sanctifier. He announces peace, for it pervades the new ground on to which He can bring them in companionship with Himself.

I want to point out the contrast between this and what Isaiah says in chapter vi.

When he recognises the holiness of the scene in which he finds himself, he says, "Woe is me." He becomes conscious of disparity between himself and the holy scene in which he was. Then the cleansing fire is brought and made to touch his lips, and his iniquity is taken away and his sin purged. The fire is taken from off the altar; that is the place where the holiness has been vindicated and celebrated. The altar is where the holiness of God has been vindicated in the suffering of Christ; it is where in the holy Victim sin was for ever judged, and man removed far away. In Isaiah's case his uncleanness was removed by the live coal; but there is no live coal to-day; man has been removed; the work has been done; everything is accomplished, finished. The divine attestation has been pronounced on the finished work by which the holiness of God has been eternally vindicated, and in which man has been for ever removed. "It is finished"—accomplished. He sets the divine seal to His own divine work. The eternal basis has been laid for the bringing in of man before God according to the order of God's purpose.

What follows in Isaiah is "Whom shall I send?" Whom does He send to-day? His holy ones. The saints are to represent

Christ in this world of darkness, and how do they do that? He sends them; He takes up the holy ones; the subjects of His divine work as "the last Adam," and He breathes into them, saying, "Receive ye Holy Ghost." (John xx. 22.) The act was that of a divine Person, but what He breathes into them is His life as risen Man. He empowers them in life to go out for Him and to fill this scene with the light of the love of God. He quickens them with His own life, and empowers them to go forth into this world as heavenly visitants, bearing the light of divine love into it. The saints of God as the brethren of Christ are as truly heavenly visitants in this world as if they had actually been taken to heaven and been sent back here. Do we believe it? "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." How was He sent from the Father? "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He was sent from the Father in the fulness and fragrance of the blessedness of divine love and affection, and so He passed through this world, untouched by it, but bringing untold blessing into it. Divine love was the atmosphere in which He breathed and lived, and the fragrance of which He shed all around Him. And the saints of God, sanctified ones, made

competent by the breath of the last Adam in resurrection, formed by the Holy Spirit of God in the divine nature, these holy ones are sent forth by Christ into this scene, redolent with the fragrance of His presence which morally they never leave. They are to shew forth the light and love of God here to men; they go forth in the perpetual, abiding fragrance of the priestly anointing, and so the incense which is the true priestly offering abides continually before God.

"Such here on earth we are,
Though we in weakness roam."

What are we here? All that we are within the veil. Such here, in accord with our place with Him within the veil. Whom shall I send? Such are the saints as sent forth by Christ to occupy the ground while He is publicly absent. Let us recognise that the basis of it all is the removal of man far away in the death of Christ, and then how God has occupied the ground in the Man by whom He removed all that was of the first order, which was offensive to Him. God has occupied the new ground for Himself, and occupied it with Christ and with that company which He associates with Himself in resurrection. There could be no association with Him on this side of His

death; the corn of wheat must for ever have abode alone; but now He is risen and ascended, and as such can salute His brethren. He can have with Him now those whom He names His brethren, those in whom the work of God has taken effect, those in whom the Spirit has formed Christ, and who are thus akin to Him who is the centre of that scene.

How immense is the contrast with all that has preceded in the ways of God! How blessed is the truth of Christianity! How great the place that Christ has as Sanctifier in company with the sanctified ones, with those who have through His grace that place of privilege within, and come forth in the fragrance of it in this scene for Him.

May God grant us all this grace.

