Malachi - Commentaries by Walter Thomas Prideaux Wolston

Behold the Bridegroom, Sun of Righteousness, The

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You will remember, dear friends, that on the first night we were together, we were looking, a little, at the blessed Lord in the character of “The Morning Star.” You will further remember that it is in the last chapter of the New Testament, that the Lord Jesus says specifically, “I am the bright and morning star.” Now is it not remarkable that the New Testament closes with the apparition of the Morning Star, whereas the Old Testament closes with the rising of the Sun, “the Sun of righteousness.” Every one knows that the morning star is always visible before the sun. And you say, What is the Scripture meaning of that? Simply this, that what the last chapter of the New Testament brings before us, will be certainly fulfilled, before that which the last chapter of the Old Testament brings before us. It is but another illustration of the Scripture principle, “The last shall be first.” Do you inquire what is the Morning Star? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the Sun of Righteousness? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, without doubt, but the Lord Jesus looked at in a totally different way. As “the morning star,” He shows Himself in heavenly glory, as the One who says, “Behold I come quickly”; and He is coming. For whom? For those who are His own, His own redeemed people. If He came tonight, beloved friends, He would come for you and me, if we belong to Him. You say, But suppose I do not belong to Him? Well, you will get your portion in this last chapter of the Old Testament, and it is by no means a very bright outlook, for an unsaved man.

I do not deny, for a moment, that many a true and honest soul has looked at the “Sun of righteousness,” as being the gospel of the grace of God, but such is not the meaning of it, I am persuaded. The context of Scripture will always explain its meaning, and if you will take the trouble to read the context of the passage, where the expression “the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings,” occurs, you will immediately see to whom it refers — a company of people, in terrible sorrow, but, who are marked by one lovely characteristic, namely, “They that feared the Lord.” I do not know whether you observed, as I read, that three times over the Spirit of God marks out a certain company by this characteristic — “Then they that feared the Lord,” “Them that feared the Lord” (3:16), and “Unto you that fear My name” (4:2). What marks the people, to whom the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, is this, that they “fear the Lord.” They are godly.

Now, I do not suppose your nearest friend supposes you to be a godly person, if you are not converted. No, I do not think that your nearest friend would exactly put that characteristic upon you, if you are an unconverted person, because of the ungodly it is said there is no fear of God before their eyes. The mark of the unregenerate man is always this, the fear of God is not in him. The fear of hell may be, the fear of judgment, and torment may be, and ought to be there, but that is not the fear of God. Ah, beloved friends, it is a blessed thing to be a God-fearing person, whether in this present time — the Christian era — or in that of which the last of Malachi speaks. Are you a person that fears God? “Blessed is the man that feareth alway,” says Scripture. The thief on the cross turned round to his wicked neighbor — grace had opened his eyes and opened his heart, and saved his soul — and he said, “Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss.” Then he said unto Jesus, “Lord remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

The man that fears the Lord is never forgotten by the Lord. These men, that Malachi speaks of, feared God, and I say, beloved friends, that there is nothing more blessed for a man than that. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). Again, “Fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Prov. 3:7). It is ever a happy thing for a man when he fears the Lord. I do not doubt that many a man may have the fear of God, who may not have the full enjoyment of the Gospel; but the point in this chapter is that the Lord has His eye upon, and blessedly addresses, a certain company who feared Him. They are those whom He will save, whom He will deliver; nay, more, He says, “Ye shall tread down the wicked.” Of course, they cannot be Christians, for no Christian would do that. No Christian would tread down the wicked man, it is foreign to the spirit and genius of Christianity, whose motto is “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (Rom. 12:14).

You may say, Who then are these? I spoke a little, last Lord’s Day evening, of a certain company of godly Jews here upon the earth, who — after the Lord has come into the air, after the Church of God is taken up, after antichrist has appeared, and the beast has made its appearance, and full Satanic power is manifest upon the earth — come on the scene, pious earthly saints, and they speak of the things of the Lord. They fear the Lord, they delight in the Lord, and although they are passing through terrible persecution, and tribulation for the Lord’s sake, they are not crushed. Here God speaks by Malachi, and says of them this — “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.” I will read it again, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and” — look — “I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” This is a company of witnesses alive on earth when the Lord is coming to judge righteously, and about to deal with the earth. God says about them, “I will spare them.”

Although many Christians might not take much interest in, or comfort out of these last verses, I believe there is coming the day when there will be a good many saints upon the earth, who will take the deepest, and sweetest comfort out of them, because they will apply to them, in a moment, when they are passing through terrible persecution for the Lord’s sake. I say again they are Jewish saints. Do you ask me, then, What means the rising of the Sun of Righteousness?

The Lord unfolds the meaning, plainly, and simply here. He says, “Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” That is not the Gospel day. The day in which your lot and mine is cast, is the day when the Gospel comes fresh down from glory, and the Spirit of God labors to bring your heart to the heavenly Saviour, to attract you to Him, and to save you. There is no “oven” in this day, but “the day cometh,” says He, “that shall burn as an oven.” Solemn prediction of what is coming! It is the day of the Lord. The day of the appearing of the Son of Man, the day when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, will be an awful day for the wicked man. Doubtless men will get on swimmingly till the Lord appears — grandly till the Son of Man appears. It will be a day when men will

be rubbing their hands smoothly, and saying, “Peace and safety.” Yes, but it is when they are saying this, that “then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child (i.e., it is inevitable), and they shall not escape” (I Thess. v. 3). It will be the day when Satan governs and rules, when Christ is utterly ignored, and forgotten, and antichrist is owned in His place, and that which goes on in that day will suit the hearts of men of the world, it will suit you, my unconverted friend, absolutely. There will be no Gospel then. You will not have a godly mother praying for you, or anybody persuading you to go to a Gospel meeting, or any one thrusting a tract into your hand. You will be saying, Thank God, I have got rid of all those unwelcome interruptions to my happiness. You will have got rid of them all, and you will be in a fool’s paradise, with the judgment of God just about to burst on your head. The Lord deliver you, my friend, yet unsaved, from the day of His wrath, by giving you now to know Himself, in the day of His grace.

Look then, the wicked are going to be dealt with by God, “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” That is very simple. The godly are looking for deliverance — for the appearing of the Saviour, the Messiah; looking, as many a man, who has gone through a black night of tempest, looks. Look at the mariner passing through a terrible storm at sea, in the darkness of night. How he longs for the morning, and he takes hope and says, It will not be long before daylight comes, and by-and-by the sun arises, and what a comfort there is in the light. Do you not think it will be a great comfort for the people of God upon earth in that day, when the Saviour — Jesus, their own Messiah, their Deliverer, comes? Immense comfort! “And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26). It will be very wonderful comfort, and therefore the figure here, “the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.”

I should not like to be misunderstood as to this point. It is not the Gospel of the grace of God, though I fully believe, that many an anxious soul has gone down on his knees, and cried with deep earnestness, that the Sun of Righteousness might arise to him, with healing in His wings, and the Lord has answered that prayer. God knew what the man wanted. He wanted the Gospel, and got it too, and, if you want the Gospel, you are welcome to it; yea, more welcome to it than to the air you draw into your lungs at this moment. Freer to you than the very air you breathe is God’s precious salvation. Whatever you are, whatever you have been, and whatever you have done, God sends out now the word of salvation, and if you are anxious men, or troubled women, you are heartily welcome to it, but that is not the interpretation of the scripture before us.

This scripture means that Christ, in glory, and power, and majesty, and having everything in His hand, comes for the deliverance, and help, and healing of the godly amongst those who are His ancient people upon the earth — the Jews gathered back into their own land — restored. They are a little company, whom Scripture speaks of by a term, which, when once apprehended, will help you better to understand Old Testament Scriptures. I will therefore ask you to go to the 10th chapter of Isaiah, and you will there find that this company is designated by God as the remnant: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God” (vss. 20, 21). This language brings out distinctly the fact, that there will be some saints upon earth, in the day after the Holy Spirit, and the Church are taken up, after the testimony of Christianity is over, and while the general apostasy is manifest, and antichrist is ruling. God, who never left Himself without a witness on earth, and never will, raises up in that day a company who testify to Jehovah, and who are spoken of in numberless passages of the Old Testament Scriptures: often by this term, “the remnant.”

In the first instance they seem to belong only to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and, if you want to learn more about them, turn to the 13th chapter of Zechariah, There again you find God speaking of them in another way: “And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (vss. 8-9), There is almost universal declension, and apostasy, and a giving up by the Jews generally, of all their own peculiar truth. But in spite of the idolatry in their midst. and the terrible power of the enemy against them, led on by the antichrist, and the beast, God has, as He always will have, a witness to Himself, in this “third part.”

In this passage we see that only one-third escapes, the rest being cut off in judgment. The two tribes — Judah and Benjamin — were those that were in the land when the Lord Jesus Christ died. The ten tribes had been taken into captivity, long before the two tribes were carried away to Babylon. Out of the captivity of Babylon, a certain number came back into Judaea, in the days of Ezra, and Nehemiah. Their descendants were in the land when Jesus came, and Him they refused, and got Pilate to condemn to death, and they were glad when He died. They have lying against them, therefore, this grave and serious sin, that they murdered their Messiah. When again restored to their land, and evidences arise, indicating Messiah’s return, this sin will press upon their conscience, for God says, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 12:10-14; 13:1).

The repentance will be deep and real. Each, separately, will take part therein. A Nathan will not rebuke a David, as in days gone by (2 Sam. 12:7-12), but will judge himself. Levi and Simeon, who were companions in murder (Gen. 34:25, 16) will repent apart.

I have little doubt that the tide has set in, at this moment, by which the Jews are going to be replaced in Palestine. Their return will begin, perhaps, as the outcome of political intrigue, and matters will go on swimmingly till they think themselves securely reestablished. If you refer to the 18th chapter of Isaiah you will find, in figurative language, the fact that they are put back in their land, but when everything seems to be all right, and happy, God blows upon the whole thing. “For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion” (Isa. 18:5-7). The Lord breaks up men’s plans, because He is not going to have His people put back into His land, and theirs, as the outcome of man’s political ideas.

When the Lord takes His people back, He will take them back Himself. He will, however, have to purge them. The two tribes are purged after they have reached the land. One-third is faithful to God, spite of antichrist's wiles and force, but "two parts therein shall be cut off and die." The two tribes are commonly called, in Scripture, the Jews. This is their technical term. The ten tribes are, on the other hand, spoken of as "the house of Israel." In Zechariah you find the two tribes returning, and being purged in the land. At a later date God will bring back the ten tribes. The two tribes come back in unbelief, and are purged, by God, in the land, and two-thirds are cut off in judgment. The ten tribes will be purged of God on their way to the land, whither the Lord Himself will gather them. They will be purged in the wilderness, as their fathers were. This is given to us in Ezekiel, "And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 20:34-35).

Now, let us turn to the prophet Amos for confirmation, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us" (Amos 9:9, to). These scriptures make it abundantly plain, that the two tribes are purged, after they have got back into the land in unbelief, whereas the ten tribes are purged in the wilderness, while they are on their way to the land.

I ask you now to look a little bit into the book of Psalms, and for this reason — that the question, Why does the Lord come in this character of the Sun of Righteousness? may be answered. Turn back to the 93rd Psalm, and you will find what is exceedingly interesting, and instructive. From the 93rd to the 100th Psalm — really a little book by itself — the Spirit of God shows us various of His activities in "the remnant," just at the moment that is characterized by the return of the First-begotten from the dead; the Lord Jesus, as Jehovah, then coming back manifestly into the world. We do not get here the hope of the Church, nor the truth of the Bridegroom coming into the air, and the Bride meeting Him there. What we get is the return of the Messiah, who really is Jehovah, to the earth, for the deliverance, and help, and comfort of His ancient people. You will find in this little book of Psalms the whole series of coming events developed, with the utmost exactness.

The 93rd Psalm is prefatory to the rest. We will read it therefore, "The Lord reigneth; He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever." It is what I may call the anticipatory inauguration of Messiah's reign. He is coming, that is the point. Yes, He is coming, but what brings Him? The 94th Psalm answers that question. Briefly, that Psalm is the fervent, earnest, longing cry of the remnant, of which I have been speaking, who, in their sorrow, and need, and distress, suffering keenly under the power of Satan, the pressure of antichrist, and tremendously persecuted by the enemies of the Lord, turn round to God, and cry to Him for deliverance.

We shall trace this as we read it. "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, spew thyself" (margin, shine forth, see also Psa. 80:1 — they cry for, and await the rising Sun). "Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Ah! but He does, and lower down, in the 14th verse, you will see they have good reason for their cry. They say, "The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness." Remarkable expression — "Judgment shall return unto righteousness." When did judgment depart from righteousness? Do you not remember? When this very people had dragged the Son of God to the bar of the Gentile governor. And do you not remember when Pilate had said, "I find no fault in Him," they cried "Crucify Him"? Yes, in Pilate's hall, over eighteen hundred years ago, judgment in the person of Pilate, and righteousness in the person of Jesus, parted company, and the innocent Man was condemned and slain. Thank God, that Man is my Saviour, I hope He is yours.

But the day is coming when "judgment shall return unto righteousness." Everything will be altered in that day. When the Lord returns in power and glory, "judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." Then the remnant say — "Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul"; and then they ask this question — "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (vs. 20.) Here we see how the godly Jew, by-and-by, will turn back to the 94th Psalm, and interpret his difficulties, under the pressure, and power, of antichrist's reign, with every semblance of Christianity gone, and all his own religious feasts, and rites set aside. Although they have rebuilt their temple, set up their altar, and resumed their sacrifices once more, all has been put aside. Hence the prayer and query — "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off." It is the cry of the remnant, at that moment, that really causes their sun to "shine forth," and brings the Son of Man upon the scene, in answer to their cry, "Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph?" (vs. 3.)

Similarly, you hear their voice in the 6th chapter of Revelation, when John saw "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (vss. 9- 11). God had been patient. The indignation which He had been pouring upon His people had not yet come to its full height, and therefore He tarries, and bids them be patient. But He will come, and they know it; and what therefore does this remnant do? They turn round, in Psalm 95, to their brethren, yet unprepared, of the house of Israel, and say, Get ready. And then, in Psalm 96, to the Gentiles — the heathen generally — they say, Get ready. They render what I call a double testimony. It is a testimony on the one hand to their brethren, and, on the other, to the Gentiles, to get ready because the Messiah is coming.

Look at the 95th Psalm. It is a summons to Israel to get ready. "O come." It is the earnest cry of the evangelists of that day — "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a

joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God: and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if ye will hear His voice, (Ah! may I not say this unto you also, my unsaved friend? Today, if ye will hear His voice,) harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways: unto whom I sware in My wrath, that they should not enter into My rest." It is a beautiful, and simple, earnest, loving testimony, on the part of those godly saints of the Lord, to their Israelitish brethren, to get ready, because Messiah, Jehovah, is about to appear to "judge the world with righteousness, and His people with His truth."

Is that all? Nay, God puts it into their hearts to turn round in that day to the heathen. Read the 96th Psalm. The call is to "all the earth" now (vs. 1). We are not to forget the heathen, beloved friends, but if we do, they will be remembered in that day. People sometimes say, What will happen to all the heathen before the Lord comes? Well, the 96th Psalm is a very great comfort to my heart. Christians have made very little progress in converting the heathen, and we all ought to be far more earnest about that than we are. It is a sad reflection that a very much larger proportion of the earth's surface was Christian twelve hundred years ago, than is the case, at the present time. In the sixth century almost all China was Christian.

I rejoice to think the day is coming, when evangelists, who will be commissioned, and called of God to the work, and who will do the work magnificently, will go out to call the heathen. You may say, How do you know their work will succeed? We saw the fruit of their work last Lord's Day evening. Do you not recollect that "great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kind reds, and peoples, and tongues"? (Rev. 7:9.) How were they converted? By hearing the preachers. Who the preachers are, is not there stated, but the effect of their preaching is palpable, and in Psalm 96. I believe we get the preachers. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nation are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come into His courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him, all the earth. Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth" (Psa. 96:1-10).

That is a splendid sermon, though I could not preach it, for the simplest reason possible, viz., that He does not reign yet. Nay, He is in heavenly glory now. He has been refused here, and has gone to heaven, but He is going to reign. In that day, these earnest souls go out, and say, "The Lord reigneth." What then? "The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Psa. 96:10-13). They go out with this beautiful testimony to the earthly rights of the Messiah, the now rejected Jesus.

I should like to show you, in connection with this Psalm, two other scriptures. One of them is the 24th of Matthew, where we shall see what our Lord Jesus Christ says about this matter. There He is unfolding future events for Israel, and the Jew. He says distinctly, that there shall be unspeakable troubles and sorrows, and "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (vs. 12). All the world shall hear of Him, as the coming King. Thank God for that. Only a small portion of the world has had "the gospel of the grace of God "preached to it, in our day, but I comfort my heart, that within a very short time from this night, if the Lord were to come, and the Church to be taken up, and this blessed company, of what I may call earthly evangelists, appeared, a wonderful change would be manifest. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Christ does not say, or mean, that all nations will be converted, because, I shall yet show you, that many will not be converted, but, nevertheless, they will have presented to them a clear distinct testimony.

But recollect, friends, that there will be no comfort for a lost man, who hears now the gospel of a heavenly Saviour, to remember by-and-by, that he might have been "saved" but for his folly, and unbelief, and there will be no excuse, for the nations of that day, if they come under the condemnation of the Son of Man, as given in Matthew 25, where the nations are gathered together before Him, and judged. It will be no comfort for them to remember that they heard of the coming Messiah, and refused to bow the knee to Him. What they will hear is "the gospel of the kingdom." You may say to me, Are not the two identical? The two identical! The gospel of the grace of God, identical with the gospel of the kingdom — the announcement that the Son of Man is coming, by-and-by, to put things right by judgment. The difference between them is immense. The gospel of the grace of God is this, you may be saved tonight through simple faith in Jesus, who has come into this world, and has died for sinners on the cross. The work of atonement has been effected by Him, that whoever believes in Him might be saved, the moment there is faith in that precious Saviour. You are welcome to that Saviour, He wants you. That Saviour's voice rings through this earth, through this hall, and says to many a weary soul, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" He brings you pardon, peace, life, forgiveness, justification, salvation, where you are, and as you are. The gospel of the grace of God takes your heart to heaven, whereas the gospel of the kingdom, if believed, will make a man very happy on earth eventually, because it is the assertion of the glory and rights of the Son of Man, about to come and purify the earth by His righteous judgment.

We see, then, that the gospel of the kingdom will go out to all nations, and then shall the end come. This allegation is confirmed by another scripture — the 14th of Revelation. It is very remarkable that this latter chapter, which contemplates the time of the energy of antichrist, and the wrath of the beast, when persecution is going on apace, opens with this, "A Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beast; and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Here again we have the remnant, seen on that which is the center of dominion, and glory, in a renewed earth — Mount Sion, where the Lamb shall reign. They had suffered, but not unto death; suffered, as Christ

had in His life, in owning God to be His Father. Hence His name, and His Father's is on their foreheads. It is clearly an earthly company of saints.

Now, a good many expositors of prophecy, in the present day, are most anxious to make out that the one hundred and forty-four thousand here spoken of, are a particularly bright, earnest, fervent set of living Christians, who alone are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, when He comes. That I believe to be a thorough mistake, because it is an earthly scene, and there is not one word about their being caught up. The scene — Mount Sion, the seat of royal grace — is upon earth, and they are evidently an earthly company of Jews, who are standing firm, and faithful for God, in that day when truth has altogether been given up. They are the firstfruits of the new scene which God is about to inaugurate. They had not corrupted themselves when all others had. They neither loved nor made a lie, nor gave in to it. Hence, they are without fault, and they share the Lamb's earthly place and glory, being His companions whithersoever He goes in the manifestation of that glory.

The idea that the Lord, when He comes, is going to take up only one hundred and forty-four thousand bright, earnest Christians, is, I think, most curious, not to say mistaken. I most earnestly trust and hope that you, my Christian friends, will not be beguiled by such a poverty-stricken theory, as unworthy of Christ, and His grace, as could well be imagined. If the Lord Jesus came tonight a good many more than one hundred and forty-four thousand would go up to meet Him in the air. Why? Because all believers in Him are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30), and the bride of Christ — not a bit of her only — must go up to meet the Bridegroom. What do you think of a man who only wants a bit of his bride on the marriage day? He wants her altogether — of course he does. And what a mercy to be numbered amongst those that compose that Bride. Such an idea, therefore, as I have indicated, I believe to be foreign altogether to Scripture, and, for this reason, that Scripture presents, as the hope of the whole Church, which is the Bride, the return of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom. No man can fix the date when He will come, but He is coming, and coming quickly, and when He comes He will take up all those "that are Christ's," the dead first, then those that are alive and remain. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying — and you may charge me if you like with speaking dogmatically — that the idea is totally foreign to the sustained testimony of the Word of God.

A little careful perusal of the Scripture will show that the one hundred and forty-four thousand are an earthly company, and not a heavenly company at all. The "man-child" of Revelation 12 will have been "caught up unto God, and to His throne," before the scenes of chapter 14 are enacted. But who is the man-child? Christ? Yes, but not Christ only. Those that are Christ's, I take it, are included in the expression. The man-child is going "to rule all nations with a rod of iron"; and in Revelation 2:26-27, we find the Lord promising this position to the overcomer in Thyatira. Hence, not only is it Christ, but those that belong to Christ, and who, like Himself, have been taken up to heaven.

Returning again to Revelation 14, we find the connection between the position, and portion of the remnant, and the angelic testimony of verses 6 and 7, which are practically the carrying out of the statement of the Lord in Matthew 24:14: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." There is the everlasting gospel — the testimony of Christ's power, from paradise onward, as in contrast with the special announcement of the glad tidings which relate to the assembly of God. Now I know very well that people often speak about the gospel of the grace of God as the everlasting gospel. I am by no means critical, nor anxious to make a man an offender for a word; but if you ask me whether the gospel of the grace of God is thus spoken of in Scripture, I unhesitatingly say, No, because the gospel of the grace of God is connected with the heavenly Saviour, who died, and rose again, and it calls the soul to have to do with Him where He now is. That gospel could only come out consequent on the incarnation of the Son of God, followed by His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, and it in no way resembles the everlasting gospel spoken of here. Nay more, supposing I were to stand up, and tell you, that your salvation depended upon this — your fearing God, and giving glory to Him — and that you would be saved by that, I think you would tell me, with very good right, that I had better go and learn the gospel before preaching it — because there is therein no word about salvation, atonement, and the blood of Christ. No, that which is really characteristic of Christianity is conspicuous, by its absence, in this everlasting gospel; but, take the Scripture as it stands, read it in its just connection, and you soon see how, in view of the return of Him, who is the everlasting Son of God, to the earth — in view of the return of the Messiah, this godly little company goes out and asserts the rights of that coming One, ascribing to Him all that is His due, as they do in the 96th Psalm.

You see how perfectly simple it is. The remnant go out and call on the heathen to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name" because "He cometh to judge the earth." When that testimony goes out, what is at hand? The Lord is going to judge the earth. The "everlasting gospel" is heralded forth, apparently, by these Jewish evangelists, just before the Lord appears, in manifest glory, to sweep the earth of the godless, and to bless the righteous, and therefore I have no hesitation in saying, that I believe the Psalm 96, Matthew 24, and the "everlasting gospel" of the Revelation 14, are all connected with the same movement, in fact, are the same testimony presented in different aspects.

I now go back again to this little book of Psalms, for a brief space before I close. The Psalm 97 goes a step further, and the Spirit of God there leads us to the moment of Christ's appearing. I will repeat for the sake of clearness. The 93rd is prefatory; the 94th, is, O Lord, come; the 95th, Israel, get ready; the 96th, Gentiles, get ready; the 97th celebrates the very fact of His coming, and brings out the character of that coming — what that appearing of the Lord will be. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Do you suppose the coming of the Lord to the earth will be a joke? Do you suppose that the day, when the Son of Man comes back, will be a day of mirth for the world, a day of fun for the wicked? Oh, how plain is the Word of God! "A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." He is going to claim the earth then; He came once as King of the Jews, but when He comes another time He will come as "Lord of the whole earth." Then it is "that the heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols; worship Him, all ye gods." The day of the utter and lasting overthrow of idolatry has dawned.

"Worship Him, all ye gods," is the Spirit's urgent call then, and if any of you have a doubt, whether that distinctly, and definitely, refers to the coming back of the Son of God, in this way, to the world, it must be immediately dissipated, by your turning over your Bible to Hebrews 1. There you find the Spirit of God, by the pen of Paul, makes absolutely certain the moment to which the 97th Psalm refers. He says in the sixth verse, "And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him."' God will demand, in that day, that every one shall worship Jesus. Thank God for that, but I am not going to wait for that day to adore Him. No, no, for I know His love, and delight to bless and worship Him now. It is my joy to worship Him, Is it not yours also? But the point is this, that, in that

day, the Spirit of God will command it, and will force it, and what will mark the day? He will be worshipped. When He came in grace, He came as the only-begotten Son; when He rose from the dead, the world never saw Him. The last the world saw of Him was hanging on the cross. The next time the world sees Him it will be as “the first-begotten” in glory, and then “Worship Him, all ye gods,” will be the word.

Psalm 98 goes yet further, Israel there celebrate their deliverance. The Lord has come and answered the cry of the remnant. “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He has done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” He has come, and delivered them, delivered this broken-down remnant, and they are delighting in His grace. They are wonderfully happy; it is only delivered people that can really sing, and they sing in this Psalm with great joy. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets, and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity.” He has taken the kingly character — Israel is delivered, the Deliverer has come out of Zion, and His happy subjects are celebrating the joy of that moment.

Psalm 99 goes a step further. “The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all people. Let them praise they great and terrible name; for it is holy. The king’s strength also loveth judgment: thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.” He is now in Jerusalem. He is in the temple, judging peacefully, sitting between the cherubims, and everything is being done exactly as their hearts would desire; and then comes in Psalm 100. Sometimes we are asked to sing it, but I say to my friends we shall have to wait a little before we can sing it to its own tune. It is scarcely the moment yet when it can be sung in the Spirit. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and in to His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.” His mercy is everlasting — that is always the key-note of Israel’s song — His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures. It will be a wonderful moment for the earth by-and-by, when that psalm is rightly sung, in full world-wide chorus.

What a grand thing it is that we can look into Scripture and see what is coming, and then can turn back, rejoicingly, to our own portion, because, bright and blessed, as is the day, that is coming for the earth, there is something far brighter, and better belonging to you and me. We who have received the Lord Jesus Christ know Him now as our Saviour, and we can rejoice in our hearts, and be glad, and look up, simply waiting to see that blessed Saviour face to face.

Is there no joy in your heart to think that the One who came, and had nothing but a borrowed cradle, a cross built for a robber, and another man’s tomb — I say, is there no joy that God is going to give Him all His rights, and establish Him in them by-and-by? I freely confess it is a great joy to me, and I love to think that when He comes back I shall be there. We shall be sharers of His glory and joy, and our hearts will be glad to the full, because it is the day of the exaltation of our own Jesus, our own blessed Saviour.

Well, friends, if you have seen tonight what the everlasting gospel is, what the gospel of the kingdom is, do not for a moment hesitate to let the gospel of God s grace do what it desires — save you. Get this salvation of God, where you sit tonight, and then you will be able to sing suitably to the Lord now, while waiting patiently for the day when, the “Sun of righteousness” having arisen, the moth Psalm will fill the earth with its charming melody, and heaven’s arches re-echo its notes of joy.

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