Zechariah - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 1, Counsel of Peace, The

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Zech. 6:13

THIS chapter, written after the return of the Jews from Babylon, and when they were seeking to rebuild the temple, was intended to encourage them in that work. It speaks therefore of Joshua, Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah (those who had come from Babylon), by name. But "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation "; and although some event previously to take place may occupy the chief part of it, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is looked forward to as the ultimate point, the true consummation. So here, after an allusion to the history of God's providence in the four great monarchies, and to the judgment of Babylon, the prophet comforts the hearts of those who were returned thence with a direct prophecy of Christ.

Christ is the great object of the love of God, and the Spirit of God in Scripture always looks on to Him. No matter what the substance of the prophecy, no matter what the circumstances of those addressed, He looks forward, seeing all things as they concern Christ, and His future glory. The Jews, for instance, had many deliverers raised up for them of God in times of need (Neh. 9:27)-" saviors who saved them out of the hand of their enemies "; but the moment the Holy Ghost begins to speak of these many " saviors," He ever looks out further: they were all but types of THE " Savior." When Adam fell, and judgment came in, Christ is promised, the woman's Seed, as the bruiser of the head of the serpent. After the trial of Abraham's faith in Isaac, the promise is made unto his Seed, "which seed is Christ." Again, "out of Egypt have I called my son," we are taught, referred to Christ. And so here: "He shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne." It is "the man whose name is The BRANCH" who shall do all this. Zerubbabel is merely a type. Nothing is spoken casually, but all with a view to the ultimate purpose of the glory of God in Christ. Whether it affect the destinies of man, of Israel, or of the church, all center in Jesus; God's thoughts about Jesus are marked on all.

It must have been a great comfort to the saints of old to have future glories thus opened to them, for whenever the Holy Ghost had awakened spiritual desires in any heart, those desires could not be satisfied with anything then seen of temporal deliverance or blessing. Much had they to thank the Lord for-to sing His praise for what He had done; but there was always either the actual presence of evil, or the fear of danger and evil still. In the days of Josiah, when there was so great a returning to the ways of the Lord, and such a passover kept that the like of it had not been since the days of Samuel the prophet, yet even then was Jeremiah uttering denunciations against the evil of the people, and the Spirit of God, in denouncing their sin, ever referred to the new covenant, holding out the Lord Jesus as the One in whom alone the fullness of blessing was to center.

And so with the church now. We have indeed greater blessings and clearer revelations, but still there is evil, for we are yet in the body. In times of the greatest revivals, there has ever been that mixed with them which tended to evil. We have surely much cause to thank God and rejoice, but nothing really to satisfy. We must still be looking onward to the future blessings in Christ. Never, till He appears, will the full desires of our hearts be given us; never, until we "awake in his likeness," shall we really be "satisfied." Nothing less will suffice, because the Spirit of Christ is in us. Constant dissatisfaction and constant thanksgiving meanwhile; for, if we know Jesus risen, nothing short of the full power of His resurrection can content. Our hopes run on to God's ultimate purpose of complete blessing.

And here we have unity of hope with the Jews. They, indeed, are looking for earthly glory-their city and temple being rebuilt, etc.-that part of the future blessing in Christ of which Psa. 72 speaks; and we also look forward to see the earth " filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah," whilst Christ's own proper portion in the heavenly glory is our peculiar hope. Both earthly and heavenly glories meet in Jesus, and will be manifested when He comes. He is the Head of both. "The counsel of peace" is between Jehovah and the Messiah.

But where is Jesus now? As "the man whose name is The BRANCH," the "priest upon his throne "-an earthly throne-He does not yet rule; peace is not yet established upon the earth, for Satan is yet exercising his power. But there is a throne upon which He does sit. He has sat down upon the "Father's throne "-" at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and this "when he had by himself purged our sins." There He is as the High Priest of His people: And thus is given to us a plain revelation of "the counsel of peace." Peace is our portion even now. We are set in the exercise of faith, by which we know and have this peace in our souls, whilst waiting for its establishment on the earth, and the time of the manifested glory.

There is a "counsel of peace" which belongs to us, an assured peace, peace indeed in the midst of present trouble, but still God's peace. If it were not God's peace, it would be good for nothing. I may, it is true, have my spirit much disturbed, and know trial of heart; but still I have a title to perfect peace amidst it all-not only peace with God, but peace concerning every circumstance, because God is " for us " in it all.

Had not man been in rebellion against God, there would have been no need for "the counsel of peace." Adam in paradise needed it not. But man has rebelled, and, though its modifications may be various, rebellion against God is still the characteristic of the unconverted heart. Such was his rebellion, that peace between man and God seemed impossible. But now, wondrous grace! we see that there is not only peace, but a "counsel of peace "-thoughts of God concerning peace, thoughts which Jesus alone could meet." Lo, I come to do thy will, 0 God! "

Supposing God had made peace with Adam, the peace could not have lasted: the enmity in the heart of man, or that produced by the power of circumstances thwarting his will, would very soon have broken it again. Look at Israel. They were placed in outward peace with God, owned as His people, favored in every way; and yet what was the result? Continual murmuring on their part, constant rebellion. As to moral peace with God, they had scarcely undertaken to keep His law when they set up a golden calf to worship, and thus failed directly. And it would always be the same; it must be so, for the very will of man is altogether wrong; "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

But now "the counsel of peace" is between God and Jesus, instead of man, and hence security. It is not merely peace, but " the counsel of peace." The word " counsel " implies deliberate purpose. What solidity must there be in that peace which God had a " counsel " about, and all the engagements of which the mind of Jesus fully entered into and accomplished! I have said that peace is our proper portion as the children of God-peace both as to sin and as to circumstances. Now it is true that the latter we have not outwardly yet, but God is taking up all that concerns us, and has taken upon Himself to make " all things work together " for our good; and the knowledge of this gives peace (if we will use our privilege) in all circumstances, be they even those of trial, perplexity, and sorrow. Was it not so with Jesus? who can be so tried as He? " Consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds "; yet He had always peace. And so might we: " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

But then it is most important to see that " the counsel of peace " is entirely between God and Jesus. The moment we begin to rest our peace on anything in ourselves, we lose it. And this is why so many saints have not settled peace. Nothing can be lasting that is not built on God alone. How can you have settled peace? Only by having it in God's own way. By not resting it on anything, even the Spirit's work, within yourselves, but on what Christ has done entirely without you. Then you will know peace; conscious unworthiness, but yet peace. In Christ alone God finds that in which He can rest, and so it is with His saints. The more you see the extent and nature of the evil that is within, as well as that without and around, the more you will find that what Jesus is, and what Jesus did, is the only ground at all on which you can rest.

God could no more rest in anything here, than Noah's dove could find a rest for her feet amidst the wrath and destruction that deluged the world. But Jesus comes in, and here-on this earth, where honor to God was wanting-here He glorified God. When God's eye rested upon Jesus, He was perfectly satisfied. Till that moment God had not seen anything in this earth of which He could say, as of itself, in this " I am well pleased." He had gone on, it is true, dealing with man in love and grace, but He could find nothing wherein to rest. " They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one," etc., was what God saw when he " looked down from heaven." But when Jesus was searched throughout, nothing was found but perfect love and perfect devotedness to God; even when forsaken of God, He still justifies Him-" thou art holy." Had it ended there, had it been only Christ's own perfectness, all the result would have been to show out the more clearly our sinfulness and ruin by the contrast. But according to " the counsel of peace," He gave Himself. Peace was ever His; it was for us that He " made peace by the blood of the cross "; and thus is He, unto God, a " sweet savor of rest " for us.

Our peace is established in what He did, and " the counsel of peace " is " between them both." Jesus has accomplished that which God purposed towards us. In order to this, it was needful that He should " bear our sins," and this He did as the " sin-offering." He was made " sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In the sacrifices, when the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the victim, there was in that act the complete identification of himself with the victim. Now there are two great characters in the sacrifice of Christ: the one, that of the burnt-offering; the other, that of the sin-offering. We lay our hands on Him as the " burnt-offering," thus identifying ourselves with Him. " Accepted in the beloved," all His perfectness, all His " sweet savor " unto God is ours. But then as to the " sin-offering," it is just the reverse with the hand laid upon the victim; it became identified with my sins, charged with my guilt.

Well, beloved, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus had this double character. He has completely accomplished the purpose of God, all that which was in " the counsel of peace." This " counsel of peace " was not between me and God, though I have, as the fruit of it, the enjoyment of the peace. I had not to do with it in any sense; it was " between them both." All is done, and Jesus, both the accomplisher and the accomplishment, in proof that all is finished, has sat down on the throne of God.

But it may perhaps be added, Why, if the work is perfectly accomplished, is He yet a Priest upon the throne? He is not there at all as a Priest to work out righteousness for us: that He has done, and done completely: " this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." His sitting down is the proof that He has nothing more to do in that way for His friends, and now He only waits " till his enemies be made his footstool."

But then, in order that we may have the enjoyment of these things, He is acting in another way as Priest. Having' the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we consequently see many things in ourselves contrary to Him-many things that would hinder fellowship with God. Now here it is that the present ministry of Christ comes in. We need His priesthood in order to maintain our communion with God; we need Him in our daily sins, as it is said, " if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We need the presence of perfect righteousness on our behalf before God; who has ever before His eyes, and that " for us," the accomplisher of " the counsel of peace," " Jesus Christ the righteous."

Here then is " the counsel of peace " which was purposed between God and Jesus. Here, and here only, have we peace. If ever our souls have any idea of rest except in that which is the perfect rest of God; if ever we are looking for peace anywhere else, be it where it may, we have got out of God's way of accomplishing peace, off the ground of this " counsel of peace." He has not called us into " the counsel," which really is entirely independent of ourselves-" between them both "-accomplished, sure, and everlasting. Nothing can ever touch it. God has publicly owned His acceptance of Christ's work, by seating Him at His own right hand. The Holy Ghost is sent to witness to us that Jesus is now " on the throne of God," having " by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified."

We may have a great deal of trial (we know we shall), trial from circumstances around, trial from within, exercise of conscience, and the like; but still we have the perfect certainty of God's favor; and " if God be for us, who can be against us? " With Paul we may reckon, because of His having given Jesus for us, along with Jesus upon everything. This is the true way to reckon upon His kindness-" Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." Observe, he says, " the peace of God." Again, the word is " be careful for nothing ": if one single thing were excepted, God would not be God. Well, if exercised, and troubled in spirit, tempted to be " careful," let us go to God about it. Our wishes may possibly be foolish wishes: still, let us go and present them to God; if they are so, we shall very soon be ashamed of them.

We have need of this " counsel of peace," because all that we are in ourselves is enmity against God. I cannot go out of this " counsel " to look at my own heart for a moment: it is " between them both." Is the Christian to make Christ's cross less complete? On that alone his peace can rest. The moment we come to establish its perfectness, the moment we seek to add a single thing, we are adding to, or rather taking away something from, the perfectness of " the counsel of peace."

Who or what shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, these things shall, as means for mortifying the flesh, only minister to Christ's glory. Shall death? It will only bring us into His presence. Shall life? It is that by which we enjoy His favor.

Nothing shall separate "! He is "on the throne" as the eternal witness of peace accomplished, and thence He ministers it to us.

The Lord give us grace to look at Him alone!

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 5, Fragment on

We saw, in the fourth chapter, the throne of God set in heaven, the great purpose of which was to bring into the world the Heir of all things-as is expressed in Heb. 1, " when he bringeth in again the First-begotten into the world." This purpose, for which the throne was set, is not as yet accomplished; for the First-begotten is not actually brought in till chapter 19. At the end of the third chapter we have the Lord's own testimony as to the failure of the church on earth, in that it is spued out of His mouth. Then Christ takes the place the church was unable to maintain, that of the " Amen, the faithful and true witness." And thus, the Lord's judicial power having ceased among the candlesticks on earth, we find in the fourth chapter a throne, not of grace, but of judgment, set in heaven, round which the glorified saints are sitting on their thrones, perfectly undisturbed at the thunderings and lightnings that are issuing forth from the throne; but when the majesty of God is celebrated, they cast their crowns before Him and fall down and worship Him as Creator. In this fifth chapter we get the things between the spueing out of the church from the mouth of Christ, and the judgments preliminary to His taking His rightful throne on the earth.

It is not the manifestation of the general glory of God, in this chapter, but the unfolding of a book, or rather the preparation for it, as it is not actually unfolded till chapter 6. Neither do we get a throne which gives promises of blessings to the earth, as in chapter 4, where the rainbow was round about it, as typical of God's covenant faithfulness with the earth. Nor do we get the Old Testament titles of God, as " Lord God Almighty "; nor do we see God, as " Creator," as it is said, " for thy pleasure they are and were created "; but it is as the " Redeemer " that He is celebrated here. In chapter 5 we get the purposes of God, the church being gone. God then begins to act in various ways, ever patient even in judgment, until the accomplishment of His one great purpose bringing in the " First-begotten " into the world. We get nothing of God's purposes in chapter 4, because creation alone cannot meet them; therefore, the moment God's purposes are mentioned, redemption must come in to accomplish them. Mark also, that God's purposes here are in connection with the earth, and not, in any way, as having anything to do with His purposes of grace to individual souls. Redemption must come in, that God may be glorified in salvation, as well as in creation.

" I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book," etc. Here we see the purposes of God in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne: they are in the right hand of power, that they may be accomplished, for He who sits on the throne is able to bring them in. There is great comfort in this thought too, that how dreadful the judgments may be, and truly they are terrible, the book is in the hand of God: so that when we read of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials of wrath, we see them in God's hand, as the settled expression of the accomplishment of His purposes; so, too, when we see that the Lamb that has loved us, and given Himself for us, is the One to take the book in the same quietness with which God holds it in His hand.

The natural mind, and we are still in the body, would tremble at these things, as it is said in Luke's Gospel, " Men's hearts failing them for fear, for looking after those things that are coming on the earth." But faith gets its settled place in the purpose of God, and is not afraid; it sees all to be in the hand of God, and for His glory. God, in the stability of His own power, holds the book upon the throne, for God alone knows His own counsels, and faith recognizes this. Thus He who has loved us and washed us from our sins, in His own blood, is Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the unfolder of these purposes of God. These things do not apply to the church, but the Christian is to have an understanding concerning them, for he has " the mind of Christ." When anything comes out in the way of prophecy, the Lord unfolds it to us, that we may intercede with Him about others. It was so with Abraham, for after God had called him out of his own country, and set him in the road of faith, revealing Himself to him, and giving him the promises, then God shows him other things which did not concern himself. He tells him His purposes as to Sodom, besides giving him the second promise, " Unto thy seed will I give this land." The Christian is entirely out of the scene of judgment here. No doubt the Christian gets the present judgment of evil, while walking down here, in the shape of chastening for his profit; but when judgment is spoken of prophetically, it always refers to others. Take Enoch who prophesied, saying, " The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment." He was walking with God, and had the secret of God's counsels as to the judgments that would be executed, and yet not at all as applying to himself, for he was to be taken away out of it all; and this is true of the church of God. These terrible judgments from the throne do not touch her, though she is to be the vessel of testimony as to what is coming and in the place of intercession, as Abraham was. " God said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? " Then when Abraham gets the knowledge of what God is going to do, he gets into the priest's place of nearness to God and begins to plead for Sodom. This is, in a higher sense, the place of the church, as far as she has faith for it. " We have the mind of Christ." In this sense it is that the Christian is a prophet, having the mind of Christ; and also, as having the spirit of intercession, he is a priest; and likewise, he is the vessel of ministry for carrying the gospel to poor sinners; and he will reign when Christ reigns. At present, the church, having received grace, through the cross of Christ, is the messenger of grace to those who are ready to perish.

But now we will turn to our proper subject, for in chapter 5 we pass into fresh ground again. When God begins to unfold His purposes, Christ must come in, for not only does all belong to Him by divine title, but He is also Heir of all things by divine appointment. Therefore, when we have the redemption of the purchased possession, the taking the inheritance out of the hands of the usurper by judgments, we find the book of God's counsels, as the conveyance of the inheritance of the rightful heir who won His title to it by His work. Consequently when the book of God's purposes concerning the inheritance comes on the scene, we also get the Son whom " He hath appointed heir of all things." It was customary among the Jews (Jer. 32:1), on conveyance of property, to have two books, an open one in which were title deeds, etc., and a sealed one laid by, in order that no mistake might be made; and this book which God put into the hands of the Lamb, was a sealed one, " sealed with seven seals." " And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look therein." Of course, there could not be any thought of looking therein as to how God would accomplish His purposes; for I would here remark that where the heart is brought near to God, it is not that there is a disposition to pry into these things, for that would be sin; but when we find God has purposes to reveal to us, it would be sorrow not to know them. But some might say, surely salvation is the all-important thing, but I ask, Is not

that settled? That ought to be the question, most surely, if it be not yet settled; but if I am a child, I have the interest of the family at heart, and, therefore, when that which concerns the First-born is brought out, I am interested in it, because my affections are drawn out by it. For there are affections which flow from this relationship itself, as well as those resulting from the fact of being saved. Of course, it is nothing but idle curiosity to be looking into prophecy before the great question of salvation is settled between the soul and God. When the conscience is set at rest before God, there will then be liberty for the exercise of those affections which flow out from such relationships. But still there are affections flowing from the relationship itself, and felt in measure, it may be, as soon as that relationship is effected in the soul, and before the soul itself is conscious of its portion. That is, we often meet with those whose hearts are towards God, without having settled peace in their souls. Take Job, for instance: he said, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God was breaking him down, and breaking him up, just to shew Job what he was all the while. Job had full confidence in God, although his soul did not know real peace. Affection was there, and when the soul got peace, then the pent-up affections flowed out. For I do not mean to say that there is no affection until the soul has got peace; but when the question of salvation is settled, then there is unhindered liberty for the affections to flow out. And when the soul has got peace, then it is ready to learn in quiet communion with God, all that He is about to do.

" And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not." It is most striking how much these twenty-four elders are found occupying the church's place of nearness to God; and we constantly find intelligence in these elders-not merely worship, but intelligence. They are always the persons who are the vessels of understanding-" made kings and priests." The church has a much higher kind of knowledge than that of the prophets, who prefaced their messages with a " Thus saith the Lord." What the Lord had communicated to them, they delivered, and after they had delivered their message, they had to search into its meaning, for, as Peter says, " Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." So, here, we find John in the character of a prophet had not the same kind of intelligence as the elders; he had just so much light given him as was revealed at the time, just so much as was needed for the delivery of his message, and no more. But now the Holy Ghost is come down, and the full revelation is given of the mind of God in His written word; the church, as such, having the mind of Christ, not only knows the message, but knows the mind of Christ about that which is revealed.

John sees no one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth that was able to open the book, neither to look thereon, and then, naturally enough, he " wept much." But what is the result of the elders sitting round the throne? Do they weep? Are they disturbed by it? No, not any more than they were by the thunderings; for with the utmost calmness and composure they at once say, " weep not." Could they doubt Christ as being the appointed Heir of all things? Certainly not. That was a settled thing, and more than this, they knew Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah: the lion, denoting power- the having full power to take the inheritance. But the elders knew what redemption was, and therefore to them it was a peaceful, settled thing that this " Lion " had all power to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof, to unfold and fulfill the counsels of God, and to bear the glory. The two things that most peculiarly belong to Christ, are power and wisdom-" Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God "; and He makes the church to participate in His wisdom, for " He is made unto us wisdom," etc., and He will give her to share His power. We see this order beautifully maintained in the history of Joseph: when in the prison, God gave him wisdom to interpret dreams; and afterward we find him at the right hand of the throne of the king, exercising all power. So, likewise, the church will share the power with Christ, for she will reign with Him, and will be the sharer with Him in everything, the essential glory of the Godhead excepted. Our proper portion now is not power (I am not here speaking of spiritual power to overcome evil), but now is the time for the church to manifest wisdom in the understanding of the ways of God; having the Holy Ghost, who, as the Lord said, shall guide into all truth; but this must be through the written word, as the written word of God is the only depository of the truth of God. Therefore, it is the great instrument in the hand of God for communicating this knowledge through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, although at the same time He may be pleased to make use of various channels to accomplish it. Thus we see that where there is the desire in the heart according to God's mind, He cannot fail to satisfy that desire. If the desire is expressed, even to weeping, it is infallibly answered with a " weep not "; for this reason, that Christ has done that which will enable the mind of God to be communicated to every seeking soul. But this could not be before Christ came, as the Lord Himself says, " Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." But the moment the work of redemption was accomplished, and Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, the Holy Ghost was sent down in testimony of the acceptance of the work and Person of the risen Man, now in glory. And, therefore, now, whenever there is a desire in the heart according to God, it is always met and answered in the power of the Holy Ghost; for if Christ is revealed, then it is God's mind that we " should grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." But then there must be a lowly mind to receive it: " The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way."

" Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." In the first place we get here the special definite counsels of God, as to the center of His purposes on the earth. Judah was the one in whom the promises were centered. When Jacob blessed his sons, he said, " Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise," Gen. 49:8. The general promise at the beginning was, " the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Then all was vested in Abraham's seed, " In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The line became narrower and narrower, Judah was chosen from amongst his brethren, and last of all, the family of David; as it is said of the Lord, " He shall sit upon the throne of his father David." It is not a throne in heaven, as governing creation, but a throne set up on the earth, to govern the earth. "When the Most High divided to the heathen their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, because it is by power that He will accomplish God's counsels. He is the " Root of David." David, looked at as a type, and as a responsible man, had failed, and his family failed also; and this has always been the way whenever God has put man in a place of trust. But God cannot fail, and He must raise up a seed to David according to His promise. At the end of the book we see the Lord spoken of as the Offspring of David, as well as the Root, but before He can be manifested as the Offspring, He must be proved the Root. For He is the root and source of all the promises of God. In Him they are " yea, and amen," whether for the church of God, or for Israel. If David bears fruit of blessing, he is not the root, though he may be the stem; if he bears fruit, it must be through Him who is the root.

The Lord meanwhile, takes another character, that of the Lamb. " In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb, as it had been slain "-the poor lowly one with the marks of humiliation. " As the sheep before his shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." In the " Lamb as it had been slain," we find the Lord taking up a dispensational character, because of redemption; and thus we find Him as the lowly, uncomplaining, unresisting sufferer, in a world of sinners, and that is where real power is found. It is the same for us now; we dwell where evil prevails, and it is our place to suffer as Christ suffered, to have discernment between right and wrong, and to suffer, rather than yield for a moment to the evil. " In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb." Although He was the suffering Lamb as regards the earth, still His real place was upon the throne itself. How blessed is the thought that Christ fills all things! If I go down into the lower parts of the earth, I find Him there. If I reach up to the throne of heaven I find Him there; and not only as God, but as the One dealing with good and evil. What a blessed thing it is to find all

this in the One who is so near to us! He who said, " I am among you as he that serveth," He who washed the disciples' feet, is not going to cease to serve them; although He could not continue in companionship with them, He serves them still; yea, He will yet " come forth and serve them." He who was one with the Father, to whom as the Son, God had given everything, humbled Himself to be the servant! How blessed to see our full and perfect association with all that love and righteousness could bring! Oh! it is a solemn thought that there is no place in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, that is not filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, except indeed in one sad exception, that of the heart of the poor, wretched, unbelieving sinner. There is no place from Calvary to the throne of God, that is not filled with the love and righteousness of God, as manifested in Christ; and if we could always give ourselves up to the knowledge of this, what quiet peace of heart should we enjoy! The very peace of God Himself would be keeping us, for we could get into no place or circumstances, sorrow or suffering, but we should find Christ there; and, as we were remarking, if Christ be between our hearts and the suffering, instead of the suffering getting between our hearts and Christ, we shall find the place of suffering to be the best place on the face of the earth for us, as all suffering will then bring us nearer to Christ. There is no middle place. The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp; Heb. 12:11-13. You must take up the cross outside, if you get the heavenly place inside. There was a veil over God for Israel, but we have liberty to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. The veil is done away in Christ, and to us it is the throne and temple up there, and the cross and the Lamb down here. Those who are in heavenly association with a risen Christ must have the cross down here, because we are alive and accepted within the veil. All that is precious is there. The church is brought to see sin as God sees it- brought into the light as God is in the light, and, being cleansed from sin, gets into the sanctuary through the rent veil. That is our proper and only place, the earth being entirely shut out from us, excepting we are just strangers and pilgrims through this wilderness world. And just in proportion as we practically know the cross down here, will be our enjoyment of fellowship with Christ up there in heavenly places. Light fills up all the space between the cross and the glory. There is no possible place that we can get into but we shall find Christ there; for to simple, single-eyed faith there is no spot between the cross and the glory, be it earth, or be it heaven, that is not filled with Christ.

When John gets into this church-understanding (as we may call it), he sees a " Lamb as it had been slain "; and he sees power given to the Lamb, for in seven horns and seven eyes we have the perfection of power and all-seeing wisdom which is given to the Lamb, before a single seal is opened. And before we get the unfolding of God's purposes, we have the presentation of the Person of His Son. It is just this in God's dealings with a soul: the eye of the soul being fixed on the Person of Christ is the way in which it gets peace; as before you can get peace of soul through the work of Christ, your eye must have rested on the Person of Christ. It was so with the thief on the cross, with the poor woman of the city who was a sinner, who stood at His feet weeping. The soul must first be fixed upon the Person of Him who has made the peace, before there is the knowledge of the work which has wrought the peace. Before it all and after it all, it is Himself that is presented.

" No one was found worthy." None could touch or even dare to look upon the book, until the Lamb, so to speak, had filled his eye. And this is that that gives peace and steadiness to the soul while searching into prophecy; for if you get into prophecy without Christ, you may be able to understand it, but it will be the mere result of the rambling of an unsanctified mind; but if you learn it with Christ, you will find Him the key to the whole thing; for if He is the center, He is also the key to the glory about to be revealed; and if you thus learn prophecy in connection with Christ, it will be to the glory of God.

"A Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." It is not said here ten or twelve. The number " seven " denotes divine perfection; the number twelve denotes human perfection in its administrative power-there were twelve apostles, and twelve patriarchs. The seven eyes show the wisdom which sees everything, and the seven horns denote power. A horn is used throughout scripture as a symbol of power, whether in speaking of an individual or a kingdom. We will now refer to a few passages as showing the importance of the expression, " seven eyes." The perfect harmony of this blessed book is a wonderful testimony (were it needed) to its divine origin, as no human skill or intellect could have preserved the connection between passages written 2,000 years apart. But we see the secret of it is, that the divine mind is running throughout the whole of scripture. (See 2 Chron. 16:9). " The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." Simply rely on the Lord in everything, just to do His will quietly, and He will show Himself strong on your behalf. Then in Zech. 3:9, " Upon one stone shall be seven eyes." It was the figure of the establishment of God's authority in Jerusalem. Then in Zech. 4:10, " The eyes of the Lord [not in Zion merely, but going further out] which run to and fro throughout the whole earth." Besides seeing the general truth of the providential vision of God, we see that in a future time, when the true branch is introduced, perfection is established in Jerusalem as the center of peace and blessing. Then these seven eyes will be established in Jerusalem as the center of peace and blessing. Meanwhile God is dealing with the earth, taking notice of everything, and manifesting His power in governing all things. And our place and portion is not that of power, but that of suffering with Christ. " If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." But in Rev. 5 we find these eyes of God in the midst of the throne in heaven. We hear nothing about the Father with the children, nor Christ as the Head of the body, with the members; but it is the rejected Lamb upon the throne of judgment in heaven, as He is not yet come forth to take His earthly throne, but on the throne of judgment " set in heaven," having these eyes of wisdom and intelligence to unfold all God's purposes.

Now, then, having the Person of the Lamb set before us, we get Him taking the book; and what a picture of full peaceful power (full power is always peaceful) when He takes all the purposes of God to unfold and accomplish them! It was not so when He took the cup of trembling; then He said, " Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? " And in order that the blessed purposes of God towards us might be fulfilled, He passed through that dreadful hour, the very thought of which made Him say, " My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." He came under the full power of the wrath of God, for our full, perfect, and eternal blessing. It is the same Lamb in the midst of the throne, that drank the cup of wrath to the very dregs, that there might not be left one drop of sorrow, or trouble for those who know Him, which enabled Him as the slain Lamb, and at the same time, as the wisdom of God and the power of God, to take the book and unfold and accomplish all the deep purposes therein contained (v. 8-10).

Here we have " kings and priests " again-" they sing a new song." It is not here the celebration of the praises of God in creation, but in redemption, for it is in connection with the slain Lamb. If the glory of the Lord God Almighty as Creator, brought out worship, so is the praise of the Lamb in redemption adequate to call it forth. If the display of the majesty of God brought out worship without fear, so here the same who were fit to worship His majesty, have their hearts' affections and thoughts called forth by the display of the glory of the Lamb. It is a blessed thought that He that descended so low for us, has the adoration of the whole mind of heaven; and having made us kings and priests, we have communion with the mind of heaven, even now; and mark how immediately this connects itself with our daily walk. If I were a Jew, I should want a priest; but I am a Christian, and therefore I could never so far disown redemption as to say that I want a priest; for I am a priest,

and we have a great High Priest, who is " higher than the heavens," so that we go at once to the throne of grace, for through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. If I have got Christ, He is God; and never let me lose sight of this one blessed truth, that I am brought to God. Anything but Christ allowed to come between my soul and God, dims Him before my eyes. He is the great High Priest; and we enter, because He enters, into the very holiest of all; so that we are more than mere priests, for they never got beyond the holy place, but we have boldness to enter into the holy place, because Jesus is there, and we degrade the efficacy of the work of Jesus, if our hearts do not go straight up to God Himself, in testimony to the value of the blood of Christ. All was adoration here, and with a free heart. A child is at liberty with its father; it will reverence its father, but its heart is free before him, not fearing and trembling as to what will please him. It should be so with us before God. His love is as perfect as His glory; and if He brings us near to adore, He will bring our hearts near in the confidence of the love that has brought us there. Verse 9. " Thou art worthy, to take the book, and to open the seven seals thereof." Here as in the former chapter we have the intelligence of the elders brought out-full, blessed, intelligent worship indicated by the expression, " For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Now mark, besides the titles of Christ, as Creator, as man, as the Son of God, we get here the grand thing which is brought out the moment the " slain Lamb " appears, which is redemption. And it is redemption that calls forth new praise, as it is redemption that displays everything that God is. Do I think of the holiness that cannot bear sin? I see it there; of love to sinners? I see it there; of the justice that must punish sin? I see it there. I see God fully glorified in this book, whether in His love, holiness, majesty, grace, judgment against sin, all has been fully met as well as brought out in this grand work of redemption. The Son is equally glorified also, for if Adam had never sinned in eating the fruit, he would have gone on in innocence; but what would that obedience have been compared with Christ's, which was obedience to death, even the death of the cross? Then see the entire devotedness of Jesus; and we have God glorified in Him. " Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him "; and all the other titles of Christ find their full display and development in redemption. How infinitely higher are God's thoughts than ours! They write folly and confusion upon every thought of man. For while men were saying, " Ah, so would we have it," and their enmity to God's Son was displayed by their nailing Him to the cross, at that very moment the love of God rose to the highest; for when man was insulting Christ to the very uttermost, then it was that salvation was accomplished. God's love rose above man's wickedness, without in the least degree lowering the standard of God's holiness: when sin was carried to the uttermost pitch in the crucifixion of Christ that only served to bring out more prominently and give freer exercise to that divine love which was at that very moment saving lost sinners.

Thus while we have seen the character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah to have been fully maintained, God never giving up one iota of His justice and holiness, and at the same time through His wondrous wisdom, by the very rejection of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, poor sinners of the Gentiles are brought in. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; therefore Israel will be restored according to His word.

But meanwhile, He is bringing in Jews and Gentiles in a heavenly way. Redemption does not set aside the Lion of the tribe of Judah as the future source of blessing to Israel, but all kindreds of the earth must celebrate His praises in redemption.

" And hast made us unto our God kings and priests," etc. We see here two things, royalty and priesthood. Besides the joy of being with God, as we have seen, we are also the nearest to God in power and worship. As the kingship brings us nearest to God in power, and the priesthood brings us nearest to God in worship, it is the blessed Person of Christ, the slain Lamb, that introduces poor sinners into such high and blessed privileges; for Christ being made King and Priest, we also are made kings and priests. All that Christ is made we are made, in Him now in the day of grace, and with Him then in the day of glory. We have the joy of this even now in our souls when walking close to God; but being still in bodies of sin and death, and thus still linked to the old creation, we groan being burdened: the presence of evil makes us groan. But when the throne is set in heaven, it will be for the deliverance of all that is now under the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God-not the liberty of grace, but the liberty of glory. Now the souls of those who believe are brought into the liberty of grace, and in the glory we shall be delivered from the body in which we now groan. Now it is the power of the Holy Ghost sustaining us against the streams of evil, but then it will be the exercise of divine power setting the evil aside. The Lord will reign then. If the Lord were ruling in direct dominion now, should we have all the misery and wretchedness that is around us on every hand? God does reign in one sense now, and in a most blessed sense for His children, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Yet now, as it is said, " One event happeneth alike to all, the righteous and the wicked." But when Christ comes in power to take the universal dominion as the Son of man, He will discern between the righteous and the wicked, the evil and the good. Then the wicked will not prosper. The sun of grace has arisen in our hearts, and now it is given to the righteous to suffer for Christ's sake. But when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth on the earth, when power comes in, in direct dominion, then a man shall be a covert from the storm. Now man does not know where to find a hiding-place. " The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

But then the earth will rejoice in the fruit of the reign of Christ. Now we are to suffer with Christ, then we shall reign with Him. " When the heavens do rule," then the saints of the Most High take the kingdom and reign with Christ. We are not to be reigned over, but to reign with Him. Our joy will be in and with Christ, but our official place will be reigning with Him.

Verses 11, 12. " The voice of many angels saying, Worthy is the Lamb," etc. We do not find the same measure of intelligence in the angels as in the elders. The angels do celebrate the glory and honor and worthiness of the Lamb, but we do not find them using that little word " for," as was used by the elders, first, in connection with creation, " For thou hast created all things," etc.; secondly, in connection with redemption, " For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God," etc. The church is much nearer to God than angels, being one with Christ, and our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost. This can never be said of an angel, although they are infinitely above us as creatures. " They excel in strength and hearken to the voice of his word." Christ never died for an angel, and therefore took not on Him the nature of angels, but was made man for sinners; nor did He send the Holy Ghost to angels; and though they excel in strength, and as creatures are greater in power, still what is this to the display of His grace to a sinner? It is in redemption that God is fully glorified, and therefore it is that the redeemed ones get the nearest place to God, because in them redemption is unfolded. What amazing grace it is that could take up vile, depraved sinners that we are, and place us nearer the throne than those holy ones that never sinned, and always do His will! -" that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Ought not our hearts to be moved by this? We cannot understand the loving-kindness of God, if we do not know the value of redemption. Affections flow from the apprehension of it, and praise will be the result. The lispings of a babe are acceptable. But our hearts ought to be able to tell an angel what Christ has done for us, and why He is so precious to us. We shall be associated with Himself in the very presence of the glory of God. The angels are round about the throne. They know what power and blessing mean, for they ascribe it to Him who sits upon the throne. They see the glory of the Person of the Lamb; but they know nothing of redemption. That word never comes out of their lips. How wonderfully we see that everything has its place in the counsels of God!

In verse 13 we see creation joining the full and universal chorus, ascribing glory to Him who sits upon the throne. They are in everlasting companionship with that divine glory. Not only do they worship Christ as God, but as the Lamb. It is as that glorified Man that they acknowledge His Lordship. He is " God over all " truly, but takes a peculiar glory as Son of man, and this peculiar glory that Christ has got by redemption, will never be dimmed. As the Lamb He will always have it. Praise to the Lamb forever and ever! The very one whom we have loved, whom we have seen with our eyes by faith, whom we have handled as the Word of life, will be the object of eternal and unceasing adoration. What a thought it is! And we learn what the thoughts and counsels of God about us have been, when we see this company in the everlasting glory. He who became as one of ourselves; He who stooped to take the lowest place, and as having no sin to be made sin for us, is there as the universal object of praise. The place peculiar to the church will be that of worship. It is a most blessed scene! The great thing that our hearts should rest upon, is the blessed character of the counsels of God as regards the church, for we see the church to be so thoroughly identified with Christ, that the moment God is going to bring in judgments for Christ, we find it has its place with Him in heaven. If the church is His body, His bride, He cannot leave it behind, it being the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. There is no unfolding of the book, no sound or sign of that judgment which is to be brought in, until we have been in perfect peace around the throne, before the Lamb, praising for redemption, that glorious, wonderful work of redemption. And while the rolling tide of judgment sweeps along, and like the deluge, rises higher and higher, until there be not one mountain-top left uncovered to escape upon, what we have to do is to sing of the glory of that redemption, which has delivered us from the wrath to come. The Lord grant us to find in those things which redemption has wrought out, not merely peace of soul, but understanding of all God's counsels of glory about the Lamb who has accomplished it all.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 20:7-15, Notes on

CHAPTER 20: 7-15

Verses 7, 8 contain a very important and humiliating principle. It is impossible, in whatever position man may be, that he should not fall if he is left to himself, and if he has not communicated to him from God a life of which the grace of God is the strength. Jesus manifested in glory does not change the heart. This change is a work of grace. As soon as those even who have seen the glory are no more kept from temptation by the power of God Himself, where they are subjected to temptation, they fall and Satan makes them at once his slaves. Satan, being loosed, comes up out of the bottomless pit, upon the earth, not into heaven, where he re-enters no more. When at last banished from the earth, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are since the beginning of the millennium, and shall never come out of it. This is a proof that the judgment of the wicked [dead] does not take place at the coming of Christ. When the great white throne is there, the earth flees away; and this is not the return of Jesus.

In the present dispensation, God visits the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name; Acts 15:14. Satan is opposed to this people in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, and who have the foretaste of the glory and the joy that belong to the people of God. The consequence is, that they are a separate people, who fail in rendering testimony if they enter, however little, into the ways of the world. Already, in Abraham, God takes out of the world a people to Himself, whom He leaves in the world. Israel was, as a nation, separated from the world. An Israelite could not espouse a Gentile. This separation was according to the flesh, not the result of faith.

In the church, it is individual faith which causes this separation. All the precepts of the gospel suppose a state of persecution; Matt. 5:38-48; 20:16. Everything supposes opposition; Luke 14:25-32. If there were a Christian world, the precepts of the gospel would not have any application.

During the thousand years, on the contrary, Jesus shall be the Prince of this world, of which Satan is now the prince. Now, all those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; 2 Tim. 3:12. We are called to suffer; and if the world were really christianized, we should be called to run with the tide instead of contending against it.

When Satan shall be bound, all that will be changed, and this opposition of the world will cease. The Lord Jesus shall reign in righteousness; there will be no temptation, and the mass of people will be really governed by Him. If this took place in the present dispensation, all the precepts of the gospel would become useless and out of place. Under the reign of Christ, the church, which has already suffered, will be seen glorified, and the world blessed, without Satan's temptations, living in peace and under the government of the Son of man. It does not follow that every soul on earth shall be converted.

If the reign of a thousand years were a spiritual millennium, it would not be possible that Satan could be loosed to seduce all those who would have the life of Christ in them. Instead of that, it is a government without temptations; and when Satan is loosed, he carries man away with him in spite of the sight of the glory of Jesus; and this is the final trial which displays how impossible it is for God to trust in the creature; John 2:24. We are called to trust the faithfulness of God, because we have learned that God cannot trust us.

It would be extraordinary in a dispensation for man not to be subject to trial and temptation in the ways of God. Those of the millennium are to be tempted like others. The consequence of it is the same-man falls. Even the presence of Christ does not prevent it; and the heart is so irremediably wicked and evil, that in the presence of Jesus it will yield to its passions and lusts, and please himself instead of pleasing Jesus. Innocent man fell-still more does he when he is no more innocent.

During the manifestation of the glory of Christ, the revolt cannot be hidden. Man may see the glory of Christ, be convinced of it, and oppose himself to it! Lazarus being risen, the Jews wish to put him to death with Jesus, because of the testimony rendered to the power of Christ. If the heart of man is not converted, renewed, and kept of God, it is capable of anything. Verses 9, 10. They will make war with the saints and with the city beloved of God.

At that time the whole world shall be the sphere of the judgments of the prophecy. With the Jews the promises and the ways of God are circumscribed in the land of Canaan, which is simply also called the earth. Later this sphere extends itself, and the four monarchies, then Christendom, become the prophetic earth. Jesus shall reign over the whole inhabited earth, and prophecy shall then extend over all its surface. If, when Christ is manifested in glory, the world oppose the people of God, it is not surprising that the same thing should happen now that Christ is hidden. To think otherwise is to be in illusion.

To understand the glory of Christ in the church, the church must be separate from the world. When the church is mixed up with the world, this only spoils the church and Christians. The world never draws towards Christians, and it cannot do so, for its own nature cannot allow it; but Christians may to their own loss draw near the world, because the old man is still in them.

Verse 10. The beast and the false prophet are in the lake burning with fire and brimstone since the judgment of the earth. Satan is not there. He reigns in a public-house, in balls, in the opera, in the theater, in concerts, etc., and he rules in the hearts of men by presenting to them things pleasant to their lusts. When Satan shall be in the lake burning with fire, he will not reign there; he will be there as the most miserable being. At the beginning of the millennium the beast and the false prophet will be thrown there alive. Satan is only bound in the bottomless pit, from whence he shall come out again to tempt men.

As long as Satan is in heaven, he is the prince of this world. There are idolaters, a Babylon, and that secret influence which deceives the heart of man, so as to make him look at a piece of wood as a god. These are the effects of the deceits of the enemy. What has become of the greatest part of the human race? They are plunged in idolatry. Civilization does not draw man out of it; the people of antiquity, whose civilization has been transmitted to us, did not through it come out of idolatry; and the most enlightened men submit themselves to things which their own reason rejects, because they are under the influence of Satan. When Satan has come out of the bottomless pit, he can no more exercise this influence, because he cannot go up into heaven again and give himself out for a god before men. He can only excite them to open revolt.

Verses 11-15. Satan being set aside, here is the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the great white throne only applies to the dead. Then it is that the resurrection of judgment takes place; the resurrection of life is for those only who shall reign. The effect of judgment is that " in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psa. 143:2. It is only those who have the life of Christ in themselves that will escape from the lake burning with fire and brimstone. To be judged according to our own works is to be condemned.

One thing that will prove that the question here is not concerning the coming of Christ is, that the place of the great white throne is not mentioned; whereas Acts 1:11 announces the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth, and Zech. 14:4 shows Him to us on the Mount of Olives. It is from that mountain that He was taken up from the midst of His disciples, and it is on that mountain that He will again set His feet. It is not at all the great white throne. When this appears, heaven and earth flee away from before His face. This is not the coming again on the earth. The dead appear before Him. For the judgment of the living He must come again where the living are to be found. In the other case, it is all over with the heaven and present earth.

Letters 1, Humiliation, Common

I must, of course, expect every one to take his own view of the meeting, and rely only on my hope that God will take His; but there seems to me to be some haste in your correspondent, as there has been, I think, in much that has been done. Where did he find "any allusion to the sin and separation existing to be excluded?" It is as new to me as to you. How could I pretend to dictate the prayers and confessions each should make? It was a point on which I had pre-eminently to trust God. I desire none to be there but those thoroughly humbled. If they are, God will surely guide in the confessions they are to make. I am sure if any one in his prayer—which I have no right or reason to suppose—prayed against me as a maker of schism and the like, it would be to have himself judged as to the doing it on such an occasion. It would work together for good. I have stated as distinctly as possible in every invitation, that those who have been, as I think, justly decided, are to be understood as implying no change whatever by coming.- wanted to have a vague invitation, leaving this out, but I did not comply. I did not bind the others who came to any approval of the acts of the former by coming, leaving all changes in this to God's working in individuals. If there are among them any disposed to join us in humiliation and nothing else, without our giving up our judgment, I would not refuse them; what I sought was this one point, because I saw some did desire it. I think if any one went there to accuse B. (and my own judgment is more than confirmed as to its evil) instead of confessing his-own part in the evil, and humbling himself because of the dishonor done to the Lord, as a great public fact among us, he had much better stay away; for the object of the meeting is to humble ourselves because we have failed, not to accuse any, however evil they may have been. This is my whole object in the meeting, to take for myself the place of humiliation, and I am content to see those who take this ground with me, that is, that the Lord has been dishonored, though they condemn me in some of my acts. I have not for that given up my judgment as to the given case of evil at B. or elsewhere. The truth is, I think I see it more clearly, feel it more strongly, and have increased vantage ground against it of a holy kind by this humiliation. A rigid pride of righteousness as to it I believe does not become us; if any feel it their place to take this ground I am sure I do not take it with them, yet I think I am as decided, and I hope I shall be as firm in the long run as they. I think I have sometimes seen something of this spirit; I do not sympathize with it.

Now my desire (led, I believe, of God) in the meeting was to separate this humiliation from everything else. I know of no social meeting together. This introduces the meals. I felt many might be disposed to fast: such was the case at Kingston. I further felt that in a meeting, professedly and solely for humiliation, dining socially together was much less in place than just taking what was needed in the way of food. Every family mourning apart [Zech. 12:12] shows not the letter but the spirit in which such an act may be looked at; and I decided to have no regular common meals, but let every one eat as his nature needed it before God; of course, several could together, if they were led to do it. The effect of this met at the same time a scruple which might be in many minds, and to avoid -what might trouble them—any recognition in worship, for so thanksgiving might be termed, of those who were walking, as they judged, disorderly. It would leave every one free to join where his own conscience was at ease; in a word, while I felt it in itself suitable, this arrangement left every conscience perfectly before God to do what it thought right. The eating makes no part of the meeting whatever; I have for the convenience of all provided for every one something to eat, that they may not have to go away to inns, or be hindered coming. I judge it will make the humiliation more solemn, and that I am very glad of. The humiliation is the sole object of the meeting. Of course, one who could not let into the humiliation he was engaged in, as regards the dishonor done to the Lord, another who desired it who was not decided as ourselves on what has occurred, could not join with comfort in the meeting. This leads me to the invitations. Unless in the case of known false doctrine, or such conduct morally as stopped my hand, I did not positively exclude individuals, or by any negative course which amounted to leaving them out. Their writing the bitterest things, possible against myself would never have been a reason with me for excluding them, rather the contrary, that they might know personal injury did not weaken my charity...

In fine, the meeting is neither social nor ecclesiastical, but of individuals who desire to humble themselves because we have not maintained the Lord's glory in what was committed to us, and nothing else. It is not about B., nor about those who have separated themselves from it. I judge that great dishonor has been done to Christ, and a stumbling-block put in the way of souls finding their way out of surrounding evil. I put myself in the first place of guilt as to this. I meet those who desire to own we have not maintained God's glory in the exceedingly precious things committed to us. I have found some who have not been as decided about a certain evil as they ought to be, desirous of humbling themselves for what we are all concerned in. I take care they shall understand that there is no kind of compromise as to our decision as to this evil, and I am then willing they should humble themselves with us also. I have sought, not exactly to choose the individuals myself, but to take the best moral care I could that those should come who really joined in spirit in the humiliation.

B. is not the subject of the meeting, but our having dishonored God: such is the meeting. I understand that with some this sense of humiliation has not the place it has in my mind. Of course, they would not see the character of the meeting as I do; they may be more occupied merely with their own righteous ground as to B.: I do not sympathize with them. I think even great mistakes were committed by those who were right in the main, and that humiliation is the principal thing that becomes us; yet I think I see the evil of B. more clearly and more decidedly than ever: I am not going to make acting against it the spring of my action, but Christ. I think, as I have said, I get moral vantage ground as to it by the humiliation. I trust I have made clear to you the ground I have gone on as to the meeting. Of course, I may have made mistakes in the execution, but I feel assured God approves the object of it, and that He will guard it from any hindrance in the main to its object, which I believe to be dear to Him. It has this character of light at any rate, that it has brought out in a wonderful way the thoughts and state of everybody's heart. I shall lose the post if I add any more.

Ever affectionately yours.

July 16th, 1852.

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