

GREATER THINGS YET. WHO SHALL SEE THEM?

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A SERMON

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, believe you? you shall see greater things than these. And he said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”
John 1:50-51.

WE cannot help making a few remarks upon the narrative before we proceed to the distinct subject of discourse. Certain catch words are exceedingly worthy of notice, since they are abundantly full of instruction. When Nathanael had doubts as to whether the Messiah could come from Nazareth, Philip answered Him, “Come and see.” Now, those were the precise words which the Lord Jesus had Himself used to His earliest disciples when they began to follow Him—He also said to them, “Come and see.”

It is always safe for us to use over again words which God has blessed. Did the Master say, “Come and see”? Then we cannot do better than say what Jesus said and use as near as possible the inspired expressions. Was that short sentence, “Come and see,” made useful to other souls? Then those who would win souls cannot do better than use such Gospel nets as have been tried and proven efficient in their own cases. Let none of us say that we cannot speak to others about their souls. There was one passage of Scripture which was the means of our conversion and we cannot do better than repeat it in hearty tones to others, hoping that what God has blessed to us He may bless to others.

Short as was the inviting word, “Come and see,” it was full of wisdom. Our Lord knows the philosophy of the human mind and understands how best to produce faith in doubting hearts. “Come and see” is the sure cure for unbelief. Some would tell doubters to sit down and think, and create faith by reflecting on the nature of things. We may long consider the state of man and the condition of our own nature before we shall thereby be enlightened as to the way of salvation. If we would judge of Christ, we must consider Christ Himself. He is His own best argument. The cobweb spinings of conceited brains are easily broken through, but the facts, the indisputable facts of the Savior’s life and death hold the understanding and the heart as with iron bands.

As our Savior said and as His servant Philip said, even so say we to all who would know Christ, “Come and see”. Be not blinded by prejudices or misled by preconceptions, but read His story for yourselves. Seek His face for yourselves, and taste and see that the Lord is good. Personal communion with Jesus is still the best evidence of His personal excellence and His power to save.

Brother, have you any doubt about the Master? “Come and see.” Do you say within yourself, “Can He save such a one as I am?” “Come and see.” Do your sins cast you down and cause you to despair because you fear that even the Redeemer’s blood cannot cleanse you? “Come and see.” See Him as the Son of God and the Son of man, in His life of holiness, and in His death of substitution. Or see Him, if you will, up yonder at the right hand of God, making intercession for sinners. And as you are looking upon Him, faith will steal in upon you through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the mind’s eye that must look and by that look, repentance and faith find entrance to the soul. “Come and see,” for nothing will save a man but a personal sight of a personal Savior. Therefore, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” The Lord Himself says, “Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ seems to have so approved of the advice of Philip that He Himself followed it up and kept to the same form of expression. Did Philip say, "Come and see"? Then the Lord Jesus says, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I *saw you*: you have come to see *Me*, but I have already seen *you*: there has been an antecedent look on My part: I saw you before you did know anything about Me, or had even heard of Me from Philip." Nor does our Lord change His note even to the end of the conversation, but closes it by saying, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, believe you? *You shall see* greater things than these."

There, you see, is the great plan of salvation as it is wrought in us. First the Savior sees us, even when we are a great way off. Then we come and see, and our hearts find rest in our Redeemer. And then in after days He gives us yet brighter and clearer views of Himself and of His kingdom. Oh, who would not come and see if this is so? If at our first coming and seeing we find life and rest, what must those still greater things be which are yet to be revealed? All that faith has yet discovered is but a foretaste and an earnest of more glorious sights which shall yet be opened up before our favored eyes, for Jesus Himself says, "You shall see greater things than these."

Other parts of the conversation are equally worthy of notice, as showing how fully the mind of the childlike Nathanael and the holy child Jesus responded to each other, as all true and childlike minds always do. Our Lord, as soon as He saw Nathanael, called him, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Jesus knew his simple, frank, open-hearted character, and he produced an example of it, for Nathanael did not blush with mock modesty and pretend to question the praise, but in the simplest and most unaffected manner, he tacitly admitted the description to be true and said, "Whence know you me?"

He felt in his own conscience that he was a true son of that wrestling Jacob who became prevailing Israel, and in owning the title he made his words responsive to those of Jesus, for he said in effect, "True, I am an Israelite, but You are the King of Israel." To this our Lord seemed to reply, "You are an Israelite and you have owned Israel's King and now you shall have Israel's privilege, for like him you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Thus, as in water face answers to face, so did the heart of man to man in the communion of these two guileless spirits. Their thoughts were so true that they harmonized like the parts of well-composed music. Their words so frankly bespoke their hearts that they answered to one another like the echo to the voice. This is the character of the communion between our Master and His sanctified ones. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," and the heart replies, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." The spouse says, "Yea, he is altogether lovely," and her Bridegroom replies, "You are all fair, my love, there is no spot in you."

Our Lord calls us, "My love, my dove, my undefiled," and we, being in full communion with Him, reply, "My beloved is mine and I am his." As upon the sea in time of storm, deep calls unto deep, so within the sanctified heart in heavenly calm, truth calls unto truth—one word of love wakes up another—the commendation given by condescending love brings forth the praise of grateful affection.

But to produce this mutual sympathy there must be a common character, a similar absence of guile, for this is the great condition of fellowship with Jesus. God's ways towards us are made to meet our own in a most instructive way. "With the merciful you will show yourself merciful; with an upright man you will show yourself upright; with the pure you will show yourself pure; and with the obstinate you will show yourself froward." When His children open their hearts to Him, He opens His mind to them. When they are true Israelites, He gives them the true Israel's privileges. When they own Him to be a great and glorious King, He makes them to see the great things of His kingdom. May it be ours through grace to be as little children, even as Nathanael was, for so shall we behold the kingdom of God.

With those prefatory remarks we come at length to consider the promise of our Lord Jesus to Nathanael. May the Holy Spirit instruct us thereby. I think I am warranted in saying that this is the Savior's first personal word of promise and it is instructive that He gave it, not to the most talented, but

to the most simple-hearted of His disciples. It was moreover no mean promise, but full of the largest conceivable meaning. “You shall see greater things than these.”

Those must be very great things which were greater than what Nathanael had seen already—there is room for boundless expectation in the words. It was promise which brought another linked with it as part and parcel of it. How often one divine blessing is like a link of a chain of gold and draws another with it, “You shall see greater things than these” is followed by, “Henceforth you shall see heaven open.” The beauty of it in this instance is, that albeit Nathanael obtained a promise for himself at first, “*you* shall see,” yet this drew on the promise for all his brethren, for the fifty-first verse does not run, “hereafter or henceforth thou shalt see heaven open,” but hereafter, “shall *ye* see heaven open.”

It is a great thing to receive a personal promise, but it is a greater thing still to secure a promise for all our Master’s household. Happy Nathanael to have been the occasion for the proclamation of the opening of heaven and the commerce between heaven and earth, and the communion of saints with the things in heaven through their Mediator and Lord. This is the highest form of blessing when we are not only favored ourselves, but are made the occasion for enriching others. Was not this the choice inheritance of Abraham, “I will bless you and you shall be a blessing”?

In considering the words which our Savior spoke to Nathanael, I should like you to notice first, *the favored man* to whom He spake them. Then the *gracious reward* which is described in them. And lastly, *the special sight* comprised in that reward. In all this may we be actual partakers and not mere lookers on.

I. Let us think of THIS FAVORED MAN.

Nathanael was “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” He was one of those who were not only of the chosen seed after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He was noted for being a simple-minded, unsophisticated person, as honest as the day. He was a truthful man who knew nothing of policy, or craft, or double dealing, or reserve. A man out of whom all the twists had been taken, an upright and downright man, true to the core, and transparent as clear glass! He was not a Jacobite, a child of the crafty supplanter, but an Israelite, an Israelite indeed, with the Jacob extracted out of him, pure, simple-hearted, ingenuous—not childish, but yet thoroughly childlike. To such a man the word was given, “You shall see greater things than these.”

Notice, first, that *he was a man who honestly made inquiries which fairly suggested themselves*. Before he became a believer, he did not, as some do, invent doubts and raise questions, which questions are merely raised for question’s sake. He did not put queries to Philip which he could have answered himself, nor seek to entangle his instructor by artful speech. Nothing of the sort. He sought truth, not controversy and word-chopping. The two questions which he put came out of his heart and were points which seemed to him to be vital. He did not go about to discover difficulties, but they occurred to him there and then, and he spoke them out with honest plainness.

He was told that the Messiah had been found and that He was Jesus of Nazareth. I doubt not he was well-acquainted with Holy Writ and he did not recollect any text in which the Christ was said to come out of Nazareth, and therefore he thought within himself, “I read of Bethlehem Ephratah, that out of it shall He come forth who is to be ruler in Israel, but I do not remember a word concerning Nazareth.” Without a moment’s hesitation, he put the question, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” It was a poor, miserable little place of unsavory reputation. This, then, was a difficulty—a true and real difficulty—and he stated it and was content to “come and see.”

When the Savior met him with the words, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,” he inquired, “Whence know you me?” A most natural question to ask, for on its answer would depend the value of the words. Might it not happen that this accurate description of himself might have come to Jesus by report? If a correct description of Nathanael’s character had reached the Savior by Philip or any other friend, then it did not prove anything, but if Jesus knew it by His own perception and could read the character of a man to whom He was a stranger, then Nathanael knew what conclusion to draw. So he only asks the question because it ought to be asked and does not lie upon the catch.

How I love to meet with seekers who, though they are in difficulties, are willing to be led out of them and are not studying how to invent more. Some of you cannot find peace in Christ because you willfully darken the atmosphere around yourselves. You are not assailed by doubt, but you invite doubt to assail you. You believe a great deal more than you like to own to, but you do not want to believe and are fishing for excuses for your unbelief. It is a sad state of mind for a man to be in—to be trying to discover reasons why he should not be saved—but that is what many are doing. That is a wretched mind which manufactures difficulties and complicates plain things, because it cannot or will not take a thing in its straightforward, simple meaning, but must be puzzled and perplexed.

Some men are too intellectual to believe the poor man's Gospel—the run and read Gospel—the Gospel of, “Believe and live.” They must needs be mystified, or excited, or driven to despair, or else they refuse to believe. There is a craving in some men for something that will appall them and fill them with despair. Is not this folly? Wait not for such sensations, I pray you. If you do, you will miss the blessing. But if, even while as yet you have not received full faith, you are honest enough to admit of none but honest difficulties, there is in you some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and the Lord be praised for it.

This Nathanael without guile was, next, *a man who honestly yielded to the force of truth*. Omniscience was proven to be an attribute of Christ to Nathanael by the pointed remark which Jesus addressed to him. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? “I know,” says one, “for I have heard it said he was praying.” Well, I did not say he was not praying, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? We frequently read in the Talmudic writers of learned rabbis who studied the law under the fig tree. Was Nathanael studying the law? I did not say he was not, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was.

What was he doing under the fig tree? There are only two people who could have told us and both of these are silent on the matter. Both Jesus and Nathanael knew, but no one else. What he was doing under the fig tree we may not pretend to guess, for it is more instructive to leave it in the dark—our Lord's words were a kind of masonic sign to Nathanael, all the more conclusive because perfectly unknown and uninterpreted by the rest of mankind. Whether he was going to be baptized by John the Baptist and sat down there to think of what he was doing or whether, having been baptized, being on the way home, he suddenly felt an impression that he must sit in that place and wait—he knew not why—I may not profess to know, but it was an important movement to his own mind and he remembered it as such.

As soon as Jesus said, with a look, “When you were under the fig tree,” Nathanael was startled into a conviction that his secret heart was known to Jesus. Under that tree he had done or said, or thought something known only to himself. How had the person before him known of that deed? It was true that his deed, or word, or thought under the fig tree was a pure, simple, and honest one, but how did Jesus know? “If He knows that I was under the fig tree and knows what I was doing there, and read my simple-minded, guileless character when I was there, then He is the Son of God, the King of Israel.” This was Nathanael's immediate conclusion and the argument was very clear and complete.

Similar reasoning was used by others soon after Nathanael's conversion and with the same result. When our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, “Go, call your husband and come hither,” and she replied, “I have no husband,” He answered, “You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.” Then the woman said, “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” It was good argument, for omniscience proves Godhead. An omniscient one here in human flesh among the sons of men must be the Anointed of God. He must be the Lord's Christ.

I do not know whether Nathanael recollected the passage of Scripture, but this was the kind of argument used by the great God Himself when He proved Himself to be God in Isaiah 44:5. Notice how the passage, in many of its words, is parallel to our text. “One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and

surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

And what is the proof of it? “Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.” He challenges the false gods to tell what was being done in secret places and what was to be done in the future, and He gives this as a proof of His Godhead. The heathen oracles attempted prophecy, because they saw how clearly it would prove the existence of their gods. Our Lord is a discernor of hearts, reading them as a scholar scans his book, and we know Him to be our God.

Nathanael had drunk into the very essence of that wonderful one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. No greater proof of Godhead can be given than the fact that all things are naked and open before the Lord. “O LORD, you have searched me. You know my downsitting and my rising up, you understand my thought afar off.” When I sat under the fig tree You did read my heart. “You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, you know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me. Whither shall I go from your Spirit? or whither shall I flee from your presence?”

All this, you see, is a manifestation of Godhead. Nathanael argued, therefore, “He saw me when nobody else did. He read my character in a simple act, an act which other people might have misunderstood and thought me a fool for it. He perceived the uprightness of my heart and now I know that He is certainly divine.”

Notice, further, the blessing of our text comes to a man who in *simple honesty believes much upon the evidence of one assured fact*. It is proven that Christ can see in secret and read men’s hearts—and from this, in addition to His divinity, Nathanael infers that “He is a great teacher”—and he makes his first confession of faith by calling Him, “Rabbi.” He is sure that He who knows all things is worthy to be a teacher and he gives Him the teacher’s title.

Then, as we have already said, he perceives that if He be omniscient, He is divine, and he makes the confession, “You are the Son of God.” And not satisfied with that, he sees that if He be indeed the Son of God, He must be Ruler and Lord, and therefore he calls Him the King of Israel. See here how he drinks into the spirit of the second psalm, where Son and King are the two great notes of harmony. “Yet have I set *my king* upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said unto me, you are my Son; this day have I begotten you. Kiss *the Son* lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

Gladly does Nathanael submit Himself to the Son and proclaim Him King of Israel. Was not this the first time that our Lord had been actually proclaimed as King since He had come into His public ministry? Was not this the answer to the wise men’s question when they followed His star from regions far remote? Here was He who was born King of the Jews. This guileless man, who seemed to lack shrewdness, had seen more than his fellows. His eye undimmed by falsehood or suspicion had seen the King, though His humiliation had unclothed Him of His royal mantle and taken off His crown.

See then, beloved, that the gist of our first head is this—It is the pure in heart that shall see God. We must be honest and sincere. We must be clear of all subtlety and craft. We must be transparent as glass before Him or else the Lord will not reveal Himself to us or by us. He loves the guileless and the true—and when He has made our eye single, He will fill us with light, but not till then.

Note, again, that those who are ready to believe upon sure evidence—for Nathanael wanted that—are the men who shall see more and more. Nathanael did not require the evidence to be repeated to Him again and again—he saw the argument at once and yielded himself to it. When a point is once proved, it is proved—and there is an end of it. One conclusive argument is as good as twenty to an unsophisticated mind. Those who are willing to see shall see. Heaven is open to those from whose eyes the scales of prejudice are removed. The Lord manifests Himself to those who manifest themselves to Him. If you will be Christians of the highest type, you must be true to the core and you must realize Christ and believe in Him with that mighty faith which sees Him and realizes Him as close at hand. The presence

and the power of Jesus must be undoubted by your soul—it must be as much a matter of fact to you as your own existence, and yours shall be the word which we are now about to consider—“You shall see greater things than these.”

II. Let us now look at THE GRACIOUS REWARD.

Only a few words upon it. Because this simple-hearted man had believed upon the one argument of the Lord’s discernment of his heart, he was favored with the promise of seeing greater things. By these words our Lord meant that *his perceptions would become more vivid*. Believe you? You shall see. If we demand to see first, we shall never believe, but if we are willing to believe, we shall by-and-by see.

There is a growth in faith which renders it not the less faith, and yet approximates it more and more nearly to sense. I mean “sense” in its best signification—so that what at first we believe, simply upon the testimony of God, we come by-and-by to believe upon personal experience. We believe until we so realize the object of faith that we look at the things which are not seen and see Him who is invisible.

From this we go further still, until we both taste and handle of the good word of life, and faith becomes the substance of things hoped for. From looking to Christ, we come to live, and move, and have our being in Him. The eye of faith gathers strength. At first it sees Christ through its tears, and that look saves the soul, though it perceives comparatively little of Him, but in after days the eye of faith becomes so powerful that it emulates that of the eagle, which can gaze upon the sun at midday. Thus faith becomes a second sight. Remember our Lord’s words to Martha, “Said I not unto you, that if you would believe you should see the glory of God?” “Believe you? You shall see.”

This was not all our Lord’s meaning. He virtually promised that Nathanael *should discover other truths than he as yet knew*. “You shall see greater things than these.” Now, what is there greater to be seen than the omniscience of Christ? “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high: I cannot attain unto it.” Is there anything greater than this? Yes, so the Savior says. I suppose He means this—First, as you have seen My omniscience in your own case, you shall go on to see it in the case of all mankind, for by My cross shall the thoughts of many hearts be revealed, and by My Gospel shall men be revealed unto themselves. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart—and when Nathanael came to preach it in later years, he found it so, and saw for himself that Christ read every man’s heart.

How wonderfully do we know this to be true in our time and in this place, for here the Word finds us out and lays us bare to our own consciences. You have been startled in your seats sometimes. You have wondered how it could be that not only in the gross has your experience been set before you, but even in little details there have been minute touches which have amazed you with the distinctness of the divine knowledge. Our Lord did not say, “I saw you under a tree,” as if it might have been an oak or an olive, but He spoke definitely of “the fig tree.” Even so does He cause His ministers to be very minute and particular, so that you wonder whence their knowledge comes. Now, when this is done on a large scale—as it is done whenever Christ is preached—then is it true that we see greater things than when for the first time we perceive that our own character is revealed.

He would see “greater things,” next, because *he would see more of the Godhead*. Did you see omniscience? You shall see omnipotence. Did you discover that I could read your heart? You shall learn that I can *change* your heart. Did you find that My eye could glance into the secret of your soul? You shall find My Word casting out devils, and healing the sick, and hushing the tempests. You shall see clearer ensigns of My Godhead than this one experiment in the reading of the heart.

The Lord, in calling Himself the Son of man, opens up to Nathanael one of those greater things. He had perceived Him to be the Son of God by His reading his heart, and it was a great thing to perceive the Godhead, but it was a greater wonder still to see that Godhead linked with humanity. Jesus, as Son of God, is glorious, but at the same time as Son of man, He has a double glory. Our Lord seemed to say to Nathanael, “You have believed that I am the Son of God—you shall see the Son of man.”

And is this a greater thing? In one sense, it is a descent for Jesus to be the Son of man, but yet you who know how to read the riddle aright will say that the Godhead is not half so wonderful in itself alone

as when it comes to be united with our humanity. The incarnation has about it a mystery which is not seen even in the mystery of the Godhead. That there should be a God heathens might spell out, but that this God should come in human flesh among us—this is the mystery which angels desired to look into. Nor may I forget that the idea of our Lord as *King of Israel* is not so great as His connection with all nations, which is displayed in His title, Son of man. He is not confined in His grace to Israel, as Nathanael probably thought, but He is brother to our entire humanity. Here was another of the greater things.

Note further that Nathanael had only seen an opened heart, but now he was to see *an opened heaven*. He had seen Christ's eye entering into his secrets, but he was now to see communications established between the lowly hearts of men and the secrets of heaven. He saw how Christ, Son of God, dwelt among men—he is now to see how the abodes of God and man shall be blended in one, and high communion maintained between earth and heaven.

I come back to the one thought, that the sight of greater things is reserved for guileless believers. To those who already have much by faith, more shall be given. Beloved, as a church and people, we have seen great things in this place in the work of the Lord among us, and we have lately celebrated with much joy and thankfulness the lovingkindness of the Lord to us—let us make this a new starting point, and hear the Lord say, "From this day will I bless you."

We desire to see much greater things than we have known, and in order to this we must have more faith, and that faith must be more simple and childlike. The rule of the kingdom is that according to our faith so shall it be unto us. Unbelief bars the way of mercy. We tie the hands of Jesus if we have not faith. Is it not written, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? We must believe or we shall not be established, nor shall our work prosper. Whatever we have accomplished has been wrought by faith, but we believe that we might have done a hundred times as much if we had manifested a hundred times as much faith. May the Lord give us downright, honest, simple faith and then we shall see greater things than these, for all obstacles will be removed and eternal love will work wonders among us.

Faith makes a man a fit instrument for God to use and therefore God does great things by him. If you are unbelieving, God will no more use you than a warrior would use a reed for a weapon. He works no wonders by unbelieving ministers and unbelieving churches, for these are not prepared to be blest—they are not vessels fit for the Master's use—rust is upon them of the worst kind. When your heart is resting in the Lord, expecting to see His arm made bare, and quietly waiting to see how He will glorify Himself and fulfill His promise, then will you see greater things. When faith fails, it disqualifies us and sets us aside even as in the case of Moses and Aaron, to whom the Lord said, "Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation unto the land which I have given them."

We must have faith, for faith fulfils the condition which is virtually appended to every promise. Has not the Lord promised to answer the prayers of those who cry unto Him believingly? but as for the wavering, He has said, "Let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord." Is not faith our very life? "The just shall live by faith." Is it not our entrance into blessedness? We see that Israel in the wilderness could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief. All the promises are for believers, and none for unbelievers. "As you have believed so be it unto you," stands as the measure of blessing—there is no other limit.

Strong faith coupled with a guileless character brings a man into the special, pleasing love of God, for, albeit that He loves all His elect, He does not delight in all alike. There were apostles among the disciples—there were three choice ones out of the twelve—there was one peculiar favorite out of the three. He is dearest to God who trusts Him most completely, and is most childlike and true. God will do most by that man who is most reliant upon Him and most open with Him. David, who makes the Lord alone to be his confidence, is the man after God's own heart, and Abraham, who in faith could even give up his only son, is the friend of God. We shall never be full-grown with God until we become too little

to dare to doubt, too insignificant to venture to question, too true to suspect the Lord. Increase in faith is the one thing needful to our advance in the divine life and work, and may the Holy Ghost work it in us for Christ's name's sake.

III. We have only a minute or two in which to mention THE SPECIAL SIGHT which was promised to Nathanael.

He was to see an opened heaven. The gates of glory are not only opened now to believers, but they are carried right away and heaven is laid open to all its citizens, even to those who dwell below. This is a great joy to the believing heart, for free communion with heaven is the delight of our spirit. I cannot enlarge upon this, which is worthy of another sermon, but I may not say less than this—that in Christ the saints are brought very near to God, for even now they have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The franchise of the new Jerusalem is extended to these low-lying regions in which we sojourn. The veil is rent and we have access to the holiest. The wall of separation is removed and now the abode of the church below is an adjunct of heaven, a suburban district of the metropolitan city of the New Jerusalem. The gates shall not be shut, nor a division created, nor communion suspended henceforth. Is not that a glorious thing that in the person of Christ Jesus heaven is laid open to earth and earth laid open to communications with heaven?

Do you know that, beloved? It is a simple thing to talk of, but do you know it? Have you taken up your citizenship, so that you can say, "Truly our citizenship is in heaven"? While you are sitting under that fig tree, do you know what it is to sit in the heavenly places together with Christ? Are you risen and reigning with Him even now? If so, this is a joyful state of things and one which should cause us much assurance. We are now dwelling in the house of our God or at the very least we are sitting by the very gate of heaven. Our condition is known to the Lord and He is near to help us. We suffer not unseen and labor not unobserved. Nothing hinders God from succoring, nothing hinders us from securing His aid.

Then the Lord went on to promise that he should see that the communion between heaven and earth, by the way of the Mediator, is not only possible, but actual. The ladder is set and there are angels ascending and descending upon it. God does hear, and help, and speak with believing men of pure heart.

Observe that, according to the text, the angels ascend first. It does say, "Descending and ascending," as we might naturally suppose, but they ascend first because when Jesus was on earth they were here already, and ascended at His bidding to carry His upward messages. When Jesus Christ was here, He was never without His bodyguard of angels and these were His messengers to the courts above.

We today beloved, are surrounded by the forces of the Eternal—they have not to come to us for the first time—lo, they have these many years kept watch and ward around the fold of the redeemed, and when a new danger comes, they are prompt to do the part of watchers and of guardians, and to carry tidings to the sentinels of heaven. Let us pray, for as we pray our prayers ascend to heaven and our praises, too. If we lead an angelical life, our thoughts will always be going up to heaven or returning thence.

Beloved, have you realized this—that as you have believed in Christ upon the testimony of His Word, you have now the right of access to the eternal throne at all times? You have but to speak and God will hear you. Some of God's people do not know much about this. Praying is a religious exercise with them—a very proper exercise, but it is not speaking with God—it is not doing business with God and obtaining supplies at His hands. It is a ladder without angels, or if you please, with ascending angels only, but none coming down with heavenly gifts. Beloved, I hope you have not fallen into this error.

What, is not prayer real with you? Do you expect nothing from it? Would you send an angel on a fool's errand? Do these ascend to heaven in mere sport, and rush up and down to do nothing? Let us mean business when we pray or we shall be mockers of the divine majesty. Too many come before God and ask for everything in general but nothing in particular—and they get but scant answers to their pointless prayers. Many more are very slack in prayer and hence they starve their souls. Many angels must go up if many are to come down. Prayer must be constant and real with us. We should live as if we really had power with God, as if like Elijah we could go the top of Carmel and pray a brazen heaven

away and deluge the earth with showers of blessings. Are you unable so to live? Then the fault lies at your own door.

What was next? Nathanael was to see angels descending upon the Son of man, that is to say, he was to see heavenly spirits and blessings coming down to man by Jesus Christ. He who truly believes in Christ, and is without guile, shall have continual succors from on high—all heaven shall be opened to him. God will help him by providence, will help him by grace, will help him by actual angels, and will help him spiritually by the all power which He has given unto Christ in heaven and in earth.

How earnestly do I desire that this church this morning may see for itself what my eyes have seen for myself—for my faith sees heaven opened to supply the needs of Christ's work and all the might of God working to achieve His purposes. I am just entering upon another work for God*. We have had enough of these enterprises, some say, why not wait? I am forced to go forward and onward. I must go, nor do I fear, for lo, I see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending, by the way of Christ Jesus, to bring us succor. We may venture. There is no venture in it—we may trust God for anything, we may trust God for everything and just go straight on. It looks like walking the waters sometimes to trust Christ—especially about gold and silver—but we need not fear, the waters shall be a sea of glass beneath our feet if we can but simply trust.

But oh, we must purge ourselves. We must be without guile, there must be no self-seeking. There must be a simple-hearted desire for God's glory and for nothing else. We must sink self and Christ must reign, and then we must trust and go forward. I hope we are right in this matter and if so, we shall see the salvation of God. Nothing can stop us. Behold, this day all things work together for good to them that love God. The stones of the field are in league with us, yea, it is not on earth alone that we find allies, but the stars in their courses fight against our foes, and all heaven is on the stir to befriend us in the service of God.

See how the ladder swarms with coming and going angels! Heaven surrounds those who are doing heaven's work. God Himself is with us for our Captain and His host, which is very great, is round about us even as horses of fire and chariots of fire were round about the prophet. All things shall be given that are needed, and as our day our strength shall be. Brace yourselves, my brethren, for a new endeavor. Be strong in the Lord and you shall see greater things than these. Full of weakness, yet stand in *His* strength each one and play the man. Say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

Omnipotence is waiting to gird your loins. Buckle it about you and become mighty through God. Our Head, Christ Jesus, has all power in heaven and in earth, and that power He pours into all His members. By faith I commit myself, and I trust, also, my beloved church and friends, to farther efforts for our Lord, relying upon His Word, "You shall see greater things than these," and fully believing that through Christ Jesus all the forces of heaven are in alliance with us and the will of the Lord shall surely be accomplished.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 1:35-51; GENESIS 28:10-22.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 335, 317.**

[*Mr. Spurgeon alludes to the Girls' Orphanage. The fund has just commenced and land has been purchased. A large amount will be needed, but there is a great God to look to.]

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