

OUR LORD'S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION

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A SERMON
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 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”
Psalm 68:18.

The hill of Zion had been taken out of the hand of the Jebusites. They had held it long after the rest of the country had been subdued, but David, at last, had taken it from them. This was the mountain ordained of Jehovah of old to be the place of the temple. David, therefore, with songs and shouts of rejoicing, brought up the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the place where it should remain. That is the literal fact upon which the figure of the text is based. We are at no loss for the *spiritual* interpretation, for we turn to Ephesians 4:8, where, quoting rather the *sense* of the passage, than the exact words, Paul says, “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” The same sense is found in Colossians 2:15: “And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Not misled by the will-o'-the-wisp of fancy, but guided by the clear light of the infallible Word, we see our way to expound our text. In the words of David we have an address to our Lord Jesus Christ concerning His ascent to His glory. “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”

Our Savior *descended* when He came to the manger of Bethlehem, a babe; and further descended when He became “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He descended lower, still, when He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and further yet when His dead body was laid in the grave. “Well,” says our apostle, “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” Long and dark was the descent; there were no depths of humiliation, temptation, or affliction which He did not fathom. Seeing He stood in their place, He went as low as justice required that sinners should go who had dared to violate the law of God. The utmost abyss of desertion heard Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Low in the grave He lay; but He had His face upward, for He could not see corruption.

On the third day He left the couch of the dead, and rose to the light of the living! He had commenced His glorious ascent! To prove how real was His resurrection; He stayed on earth some 40 days, and showed Himself to many witnesses. Magdalene and Peter saw Him alone; the 11 beheld Him in their midst. The two on the road conversed with Him. Five hundred brethren at once beheld Him! He gave infallible proofs that He was really risen from the dead, and these remain with us unto this day as *historic facts*. He ate a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb, to prove that He was no phantom. He said to the apostles, “Handle Me, and see that it is I, Myself, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” One laid his finger in the print of the nails, and even thrust his hand into His side! Their very doubts were used to make the evidence clearer! The fact that Jesus died was put beyond question by the thrust of the spear; and the fact that He was alive, in a material form, was equally well established by the touch of Thomas. Beyond a doubt, Christ Jesus has risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

This being settled beyond question, the time came for our Lord to continue His homeward, upward journey, and return unto the glory from which He had come down. From “the mount called Olivet,” while His disciples surrounded Him, “He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

The rest of His upward progress we cannot describe. Imagination and faith step in, and conceive of Him as rising beyond all regions known to us; far above all imaginable height. He draws near to the suburbs of heaven, and surely the poet is not wrong when he says of the angels—

*“They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done.’”*

“Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.” How high He ascended after He passed the pearly portal, Paul cannot tell us, save that he says, “He ascended up far above all heavens,” and describes Him as, “set at God’s right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” He describes our Master as, “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.” The man Christ Jesus has gone back to the place from where His Godhead came! You are the King of glory, O Christ! You are the eternal Son of the Father! You sit forever in the highest heaven, enthroned with all glory, clothed with all power, King of kings and Lord of lords! Unto Your name we humbly present our hallelujahs, both now and forever.

I. Now, concerning the text itself, which speaks of the ascent of our ever blessed Lord, we shall say, first, that OUR LORD’S TRIUMPH WAS SET FORTH BY HIS ASCENSION.

He came here to fight the foes of God and man. It was a tremendous battle—not against flesh and blood; but against *spiritual* wickedness and evil powers. Our Lord fought against sin, death, hell, hate of God, and love of falsehood. He came to earth to be our champion. For you, and for me, beloved, He entered the battle, and wrestled till He sweat great drops of blood—yes, “He poured out His soul unto death.” When He had ended the struggle, He declared His victory by ascending to the Father’s throne.

Now His descent is ended. There was no need for Him to remain amid the men who despised Him. The shame, suffering, blasphemy, and rebuke are far beneath Him now. The sun has risen, and the darkness of night has fled. He has gone up beyond the reach of sneering Sadducees, and accusing Pharisees. The traitor cannot again kiss Him, Pilate cannot scourge Him, Herod cannot mock Him, He is far above the reach of priestly taunt and vulgar jest—

*“No more the cruel spear,
The cross and nails no more;
For hell itself shakes at His frown,
And all the heavens adore.”*

Now, also, our Lord’s work is done. We are sure that the purpose of His love is secure, or He would not have returned to His rest. The love that brought Him here would have kept Him here if all things necessary for our salvation had not been finished. Our Lord Jesus is no sudden enthusiast who rashly commences an enterprise of which He wearies before it is accomplished. He does not give up a work which He has once undertaken. Because He said, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do,” and then ascended to the Father, I feel safe in asserting that all that was required of the Lord Christ for the overthrow of the powers of darkness is performed and endured; all that is needed for the salvation of His redeemed is fully done! Whatever was the design of Christ’s death, it will be accomplished to the fullest, for had He not secured its accomplishment, He would not have gone back. I do not believe in a defeated and disappointed Savior, or in a divine sacrifice which fails to complete its purpose. I do not believe in an atonement which is admirably wide, but fatally ineffectual. I rejoice to hear my Lord say, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Whatever was the purpose of the Christ of God in the great transaction of the cross, it must be fully completed: to conceive a failure, even of a *partial* kind, is scarcely reverent. Jesus has seen to it that in no point shall His work be frustrated. Nothing is left undone of all His covenanted engagements. “It is finished” is a description of every item of the divine labor; and, therefore, has He ascended on high. There are no dropped stitches in the robe of Christ! I say again, the love that brought our Lord here would have kept Him here if He had not been absolutely sure that all His work and warfare for our salvation had been accomplished to the fullest.

Further, as we see here the ending of our Lord’s descent, and the accomplishment of His work, remember that *His ascent to the Father is representative*. Every believer rose with Him, and grasped the inheritance! When He rose up, ascending high, He taught our feet the way. At the last His people shall

be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall they be forever with the Lord. He has made a stairway for His saints to climb to their bliss, and He has traveled it Himself to assure us that the new and living way is available for us. In His ascension He bore all His people with Him! As Levi was in the loins of Abraham, when Melchisedec met him, so were all the saints in the loins of Christ when He ascended up on high; not one of the number shall fail to come where the head has entered, else were Jesus the head of an imperfect and mutilated body! Though you have no other means of getting to glory but faith in Jesus, that way will bring you there without fail! Not only will He not be in glory, and leave us behind, but He cannot be so since we are one with Him; and where He is, His people must be. We are in the highest glory in Jesus as our representative, and by faith we are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies, even in Him.

Our Lord's ascent is to the highest heaven. I have noted this already, but let me remind you of it again, lest you miss an essential point. Our Lord Jesus is in no inferior place in the glory land. He was a servant here, but He is not so there. I know that He intercedes, and thus carries on a form of service on our behalf; but no striving, vying, and tears are mingled with His present pleading. With authority He pleads. He is a Priest upon His throne, blending with His plea the authority of His personal merit. He says, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and, therefore, He is glorious in His prayers for us! He is Lord of every place, and of everything; He guides the wheels of providence, and directs the flight of angels; His kingdom rules over all! He is exalted above every name that is named, and all things are put under Him. Oh, what a Christ we have to trust in and to love!

And on this account *we are called upon in the text to think much of His blessed person.* When we speak of what Christ has done, we must think much of the doing, but still more of the doer. We must not forget the Benefactor in the benefits which come to us through Him. Note well how David puts it. To him the Lord is first, and most prominent. He sees Him. He speaks to Him. "You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts for men." Three times he addresses Him by that personal pronoun, "You." Dwell on the fact that He, the Son of David, who for our sakes came down on earth, and lay in the manger; and hung upon a woman's breast, has gone up on high into glory! He that trod the weary ways of Palestine now reigns as a King in His palace. He that sighed, hungered, wept, bled, and died is now above all heavens! Behold your Lord upon the cross; mark the five ghastly wounds, and all the shameful scourging and spitting which men have worked upon Him! See how that blessed body, prepared of the Holy Spirit for the indwelling of the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, was evilly treated! But there is an end to all this: "You have ascended on high." He that was earth's scorn, is now heaven's wonder! I saw You laid in the tomb, wrapped about with cerements, and embalmed in spices; but You have ascended on high where death cannot touch You! The Christ that was buried here is now upon the throne! The heart which was broken here is palpitating in His bosom this minute, as full of love and condescension as when He dwelt among men! He has not forgotten us, for He has not forgotten Himself, and we are part and parcel of Himself! He is still mindful of Calvary and Gethsemane. Even when you are dazzled by the superlative splendor of His exalted state, still believe that He is a brother born for adversity.

Let us rejoice in the ascent of Christ as being the ensign of His victory, and the symbol of it! He has accomplished His work. If You had not led captivity captive, O Christ, You had never ascended on high; and if You had not won gifts of salvation for the sins of men, You had been here still suffering! You would never have relinquished Your chosen task if You had not perfected it. You are so set on the salvation of men, that for the joy that was set before You, You did endure the cross, despising the shame; and we know that all must have been achieved, or You would still be working out Your gracious enterprise. The voice of the ascension is—CONSUMMATUM EST—"It is finished."

II. Having led your thoughts that way, I would, secondly, remind you that THE LORD'S TRIUMPHAL ASCENT DEMONSTRATED THE DEFEAT OF ALL OUR FOES. "You have led captivity captive" is as certain as, "You have ascended on high."

Brethren, *we were once captives*—captives to tyrants who worked us woe, and would soon have worked us death. We were captives to sin. We were captives to Satan, and therefore captives under spiritual death. We were captives under many lusts and imaginations of our own hearts; we were captives to error, captives to deceit. But the Lord Jesus Christ has led captivity captive! *There* is our

comfort! Forget not that we were hopeless captives to all these—they were too strong for us, and we could not escape from their cruel bondage.

The Lord Jesus, by His glorious victory here below, has subdued all our adversaries, and in His going up on high He has triumphed over them all, exhibiting them as trophies. The imagery may be illustrated by the triumph of Roman conquerors. They were known to pass along the Via Sacra, and climb up to the Capitol, dragging at their chariot wheels the vanquished princes with their hands bound behind their backs. All those powers which held you captive have been vanquished by Christ. Whatever form your spiritual slavery took, you are fully delivered from it, for the Lord Christ has made captives those whose captives you were! “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Concerning Satan, our Lord has bruised his head beneath His heel. Death also is overcome, and his sting is taken away. Death is no more the king of dread—“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Whatever there was or is which can oppress our soul, and hold it in bondage, the Lord Jesus has subdued and made it captive to Himself.

What then? Why, *from now on the power of all our adversaries is broken!* Courage, Christians! You can fight your way to heaven for the foes who dispute your passage have been already beaten in the field! They bear upon them the proofs of the valor of your Leader. True, the flock of the Lord is too feeble to force its way, but listen, “The Breaker is come up before them, and the King at the head of them.” Easily may the sheep follow where the Shepherd leads the way! We have but to follow those heavenly feet which once were pierced, and none of our steps shall slide! Move on, O soldiers of Jesus, for your Captain cries, “Follow Me!” Would He lead you into evil? Has He not said, “You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.” Your Lord has set His foot on the necks of your enemies; you wage war with vanquished foes! What encouragement this glorious ascension of Christ should give to every tried believer!

Remember, again, that *the victory of our Lord Christ is the victory of all who are in Him.* “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Now, the seed of the woman is, first of all, the Lord Jesus; but also it is all who are in union with Him. There are still two seeds in the world—the seed of the serpent which cannot enter into this rest, and the seed of the woman who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. In these last is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. Jesus, our Lord, represents them in all that He does; they died in Him, were buried in Him, are raised in Him, and in the day when He triumphed, they led captivity captive in Him! Looking at the great battle now raging in the world, I gaze with joyful confidence. We are fighting now with Popery, with Mohammedanism, with idolatry in the foulest forms; but the battle is, in effect, won! We are struggling with the terrible infidelity which has fixed itself like a cancer upon the church of God, and our spirit sinks as we survey the horrors of this almost civil war. How often we groan because the battle does not go as we would desire it! Yet there is no reason for dismay. God is in no hurry as we are. He dwells in the leisure of *eternity*, and is not the prey of fear as we are. We read concerning the multitude, when they needed to be fed, that Jesus asked Philip a question—but yet it is added, “However Jesus knew what He would do.” So today the Lord may put many questions to His valiant ones, and, “for the divisions of Reuben there may be great searchings of heart,” but He knows what He is going to do, and we may lay our heads upon His bosom, and rest quietly. If He does not tell us how He will effect His purpose, yet assuredly He will not fail. His cause is sure to win the victory—how can the *Lord* be defeated? A vanquished Christ?! We have not yet learned to blaspheme, and so we put the notion far from us! No, brothers and sisters, by those bleeding hands and feet He has secured the struggle. By that side opened down to His heart we feel that His heart is fixed in our cause. Especially by His resurrection, and by His climbing to the throne of God, He has made the victory of His truth, the victory of His church, the victory of Himself most sure and certain!

III. Let us notice, thirdly, that **OUR LORD’S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION WAS CELEBRATED BY GIFTS.** The custom of bestowing gifts after victory was practiced among the Easterns, according to the song of Deborah. Those to whom a triumph was decreed in old Rome scattered money among the populace. Sometimes it seemed as if every man in the city was made rich by his share of the spoils of vanquished princes. Thus our Lord, when He ascended on high, received gifts for men, and scattered largess all around.

The psalm says: "You have *received* gifts for men." The Hebrew has it, "You have received gifts in Adam"—that is, in human nature. Our Lord Christ had everything as Lord; but as the man, the Mediator, He has received gifts from the Father. "The King eternal, immortal, invisible," has bestowed upon His triumphant general a portion with the great, and He has ordained that He shall divide the spoil with the strong. This our Lord values, for He speaks of all that the Father has given Him with the resolve that He will possess it.

When Paul quotes the passage, he says, "He *gave* gifts to men." Did Paul quote incorrectly? I think not. He quoted, no doubt, from the Greek version. Is the Greek version, therefore, compatible with the Hebrew? Assuredly! Dr. Owen says that the word rendered "received" may be read "gave." And if not, for Christ to *receive* for men is the same thing as to *give to* men, for He never receives for Himself, but at once gives it to those who are *in* Him. Paul looks to the central meaning of the passage, and gives us the heart and soul of its sense. He is not intending to quote it verbatim, but to give in brief its innermost teaching. Our Lord Jesus Christ has *nothing* which He does not give to His church. He gave *Himself* for us, and He continues, still, to give Himself *to* us. He receives the gifts, but He only acts as the conduit through which the grace of God flows to us. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and of His fullness have we all received.

What are these great ascension gifts? I answer that *the sum of them is the Holy Spirit*. I invite your adoring attention to the sacred Trinity manifested to us here. How delightful it is to see the Trinity working out in unity the salvation of men! "You have ascended on high"—there is Christ Jesus. "You have received gifts for men"—there is the Father, bestowing those gifts. The Gift itself is the Holy Spirit. This is the great generosity of Christ's ascension which He bestowed on His church at Pentecost. Thus you have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit blessedly co-working for the benediction of men, the conquest of evil, the establishment of righteousness! O my soul, delight yourself in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! One of the sins of modern theology is keeping these divine persons in the background so that they are scarcely mentioned in their several workings and offices. The theology which can feed your souls must be full of Godhead, and yield to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit perpetual praise!

Beloved, the gifts here spoken of are those brought by the Holy Spirit. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." He said again, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink." We read that He "spoke of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him should receive." "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" To conquer the world for Christ, we need nothing but the Holy Spirit, and in the hour of His personal victory He secured us this gift. If the Holy Spirit is but given we have in Him all the weapons of our holy war.

But observe, according to Paul, these gifts which our Lord gave are *embodied in men*, for the Holy Spirit comes upon men whom He has chosen, and works through them according to His good pleasure. Therefore He gave some apostles, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. No one may be judged to be given of God to the church in any of these offices unless the Spirit dwells upon him. All are given of God upon whom the Holy Spirit rests, whatever their office may be. It is ours to accept with great joy the men who are chosen and anointed to speak in the name of the Lord, be they what they may. Paul, Apollos, Cephas; they are all the *gifts* of the risen Christ to His redeemed ones for their edifying and perfecting! The Holy Spirit, in proportion as He abides in these servants of God, makes them to be precious blessings of heaven to His people, and they become the champions by whom the world is subdued to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These gifts, given in the form of men, *are given for men*. Churches do not exist for preachers, but preachers for churches. We have sometimes feared that certain brothers thought that the assemblies of believers were formed to provide situations for clerical persons; but, indeed, it is not so. My brothers and sisters in the church, we who are your pastors are your *servants* for Christ's sake! Our rule is not that of lordship, but of love. Every God-sent minister, if he discharges his duty aright, waits upon the bride of Christ with loving diligence, and delights greatly to hear the Bridegroom's voice. I wish that you who talk of my Lord's servants as if they were rival performers would cease, thus, to profane the gifts of the ascended King. The varying abilities of those by whom the Lord builds up His church are all arranged

by infinite wisdom, and it should be ours to make the most we can of them. Comparing and contrasting the Lord's gifts is unprofitable work; it is better to drink of the well of Elim, than to grow hot and feverish in disputing as to whether it is better or worse than Beersheba or Sychar. One minister may be better for you than another, but another may be better for somebody else than the one you prefer. The least gifted may be essential to a certain class of mind; therefore despise no one. When God gives gifts, shall you turn them away contemptuously, and say, "I like this one, but the other I do not"? Did the Father bestow these gifts upon His Son, and has the Holy Spirit put them into different earthen vessels that the excellence of the power might be of God; and will you begin judging them? No, beloved, the Lord has sent me to preach His gospel, and I rejoice to feel that I am sent for your sake. I entreat you to profit as much as you can by me by frequent hearing, by abounding faith, by practical obedience to the Word. Use all God's servants as you are able to profit by them. Hear them prayerfully; not for the indulgence of your curiosity, or for the pleasing of your ear with rhetoric; but that you, through the Word of God, may feel His Spirit working in our hearts all the purpose of His will. Our conversion, sanctification, comfort, instruction, and usefulness all come to us by the Holy Spirit; and that Spirit sends His powerful message by the men whom He has given to be His mouths to men. See how wonderful, then, was that ascension of our Lord in which He scattered down mercies so rich and appropriate among the sons of men! From His glorious elevation above all heavens, He sends forth pastors, preachers, and evangelists, through whom the Holy Spirit works mightily in them that believe. By them He gathers the redeemed together, and builds them up as a church to His glory!

IV. I want the attention, now, of all who are unconverted, for I have glorious tidings for them. To them I speak under my fourth head, OUR LORD'S TRIUMPH HAS A VERY SPECIAL BEARING.

"You have received gifts *for men*," not for angels, not for devils, but for *men*—poor fallen men. I read not that it is said, "for bishops or ministers," but, "for men." And yet there is a special character mentioned. Does the text particularly mention, "saints," or those that have not defiled their garments? No, I do not read of them here. What a strange sovereignty there is about the grace of God! Truly He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, for in this instance He selects for special mention those that you and I would have passed over without a word! "*Yes, for the rebellious*, also." I must pause to brush my tears away! Where are you, you rebels? Where are those who have lived in rebellion against God all their lives? Alas, you have been in open revolt against Him; you have raged against Him in your hearts, and spoken against Him with your tongues! Some have sinned as drunkards; others have broken the laws of purity, truth, honesty. Many rebel against the light, violate conscience, and disobey the Word; these, also, are among the rebellious. So are the proud, the wrathful, the slothful, the profane, the unbelieving, the unjust. Hear, all of you, these words, and carry them home! And if they do not break your hearts with tender gratitude, you are hard, indeed. "*Yes, for the rebellious also*." When our Lord rode home in triumph, He had a pitying heart towards the rebellious! When He entered the highest place to which He could ascend, He was still the *sinner's* friend! When all His pains and griefs were being rewarded with endless horror, He turned His eyes upon those who had crucified Him, and bestowed gifts upon them!

This description includes those who have rebelled against God, though once they professed to be His loyal subjects. Perhaps I am addressing some who have so far backslidden that they have thrown up all religion, and have gone back into the world and its sins; these are apostates from the profession which once they made. To these I would give a word of encouragement, if they will turn to the Lord. Once upon a time John Bunyan was under great temptation from the devil. This trial he records in his, "*Grace Abounding*." He thought that God had given him up, and that he was cast away forever, and yet he found hope in this text. I have copied out a little bit which refers to it—"I feared, also, that this was the mark that the Lord set on Cain, even continual fear and trembling under the heavy load of guilt that He had charged him for the blood of his brother Abel. Then did I wind and twine, and shrink under the burden that was upon me, which burden did also so oppress me, that I could neither stand, nor go, nor lie, either at rest or quiet. Yet that saying would sometimes come into my mind, 'He has received gifts for the rebellious.' Rebellious, thought I, why surely they are such as once were under subjection to their Prince, even those who, after they had sworn subjection to His government, have taken up arms against Him; and this, thought I, is *my* very condition! Once I loved Him, feared Him, served Him; but now I am

a rebel, and I have sold Him. I said, let Him go if He will, but yet He has gifts for rebels; *and then why not for me?*"

Oh, that I could cause every despairing heart to reason in this way! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would put this argument into every troubled mind at this moment—"And then why not for me?" Come home, dear brothers and sisters, for there are gifts for the rebellious—and why not for you? I know you deserted the Lord's Table, but the Lord of the Table has not deserted you! I know you have, as far as you could, forsworn the name of Christ, and even wished you could be unbaptized; but that cannot be, nor can the Lord leave you to perish! I know you have eagerly done evil with both hands, and perhaps now you are living in a known sin; and when you go home today you will see it before your eyes. Nevertheless, I charge you, Return unto the Lord at once! Come to your Lord and Savior who still prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Behold how in His glory He "has received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also." O my soul, I charge you, on your own account, hang on to this most precious declaration, for you, too, have been a rebel! Would God that all my brothers and sisters would be cheered by this dear word, and take it home to themselves with a believing repentance, and a holy hatred of sin! I would print the words in stars across the brow of night—"Yes, for the rebellious, also."

V. I have done when I have handled the fifth point, which is this: OUR LORD'S TRIUMPHANT ASCENSION SECURES THE CONSUMMATION OF HIS WHOLE WORK. What does it say? "That the Lord God might dwell among them." When our Lord Christ came here at the first, He was willing enough to "dwell" among us, but it could not be. "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us," like a Bedouin in his tent, but not as a dweller at home. He could not "dwell" here on that occasion. He was but a *visitor*, and badly treated at that. "There was no room for Him in the inn," where everybody else was freely welcome. "He came unto His own"; surely they will lodge Him, "but His own received Him not." There was no room for Him in the temple; there He had to use the scourge. There was no room for Him in the open streets, for they took up stones to stone Him. Out of the synagogue they hurried him, to cast him down headlong from the brow of the hill. "Away with Him! Away with Him!" was the cry of the ribald crowd. This dear visitor who came here all unarmed, without sword or bow; they treated as though He had been a spy or an assassin who had stolen among them to do them ill. And so they ran upon Him with a spear, and He, quitting these inhospitable realms which knew Him not, took home with Him the marks of man's discourtesy. O earth, earth! How could you drive away your dearest friend, and compel Him to be as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night? No, worse—as a man astonished who meets with wounding in the house of his friends?

After He had risen again, He went home; that from His throne He might direct a work by which earth should become a place where God could abide. Again is the temple of God to be with men, and He shall dwell among them! This world of ours has been sprinkled with the precious blood of the Lamb of God, and it is no longer as an unclean thing. Jesus is the Lamb of God who so takes away the sin of the world, that God can treat with men on terms of divine grace and publish free salvation. The Lord God Himself had long been a stranger in the land! Did not the holy man of old say, "I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were"? But Jesus, the ascended One, is pouring down such gifts upon this sin-polluted world, that it will yet become a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, and the God of righteousness!

This promise is partly fulfilled before your own eyes this day, for the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and He has never returned. Jesus said, "He shall abide with you forever." The Holy Dove has often been greatly grieved, but He has never spread His wings to depart. This is still the dispensation of the Spirit. You hardly need to pray to have the Spirit poured out, for that has been done. What you need is a *baptism* of the Holy Spirit—namely, to go down *personally* into that glorious flood which has been poured forth. Oh, to be immersed into the Holy Spirit, and into fire; covered with His holy influence, "plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea, and lost in His immensity!" Here is our life and power, for thus the Lord God does dwell among us! The Holy Spirit has remained among men ever since the ascension, though He has not been, at all seasons, equally active. All through the night of Romanism, and the schoolmen, He still tarried; there were humble hearts which rejoiced to be His temples even in those doleful days. Today He is still with His regenerated ones. In spite of impudent striving against the divine

inspiration of His Holy Scripture, and, notwithstanding the follies of ecclesiastical amusements, He is with His chosen. Lord, what is man that Your Spirit should dwell with him? But so it is, and this is why our Lord went up to heaven and received divine gifts that by Him the Lord God might dwell among us.

But there comes a day when this shall be carried out to the letter. I think I hear the angels say, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." Now, "in like manner," must mean in person. In *person* our Lord was taken up into heaven, and in *person* He will come again! And when He comes, the Lord God will, indeed, dwell among us! Oh, that the day would come! We wait and watch for His glorious appearing—for then will He dwell among men in a perfect fashion. What happy days shall we have when Jesus is here! What a millennium His presence will bring; there can be no such auspicious era without it, any more than there can be summer without the sun! He must come, first, and then will the golden age begin! The central glory of that period shall be that the Lord is here! "The Lord God shall dwell among them." Then shall be heard the song which will never end; earth's homage to the Lord who renewed the heavens and the earth, and has taken up His dwelling in them. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them."

Up till now this work has been going on, and as yet it is incomplete. "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile," is still most sadly true. The rankness of sin destroys the sweet odors of this world, so that the pure and holy God cannot abide in it. But since the Lord Jesus has sweetened it with His sacred merits, and the Spirit is purifying it by His residence in men, the Lord smells a savor of rest, and He will not give up this poor fallen planet. Even now His angels come and go in heavenly traffic with the chosen. Soon the little boat of this globe shall be drawn nearer to the great ship, and earth shall lie alongside heaven. Then shall men praise God day and night in His temple! Heaven shall find her choristers among the ransomed from among men. The whole world shall be as a censer filled with incense for the Lord of hosts. All this will be because of those gifts received and bestowed by our Lord Jesus in the day when He returned to His glory, leading captivity captive! O Lord, hasten Your coming! We are sure that Your abiding presence, and glorious reign will come in due season. Your coming down secured Your going up; Your going up secures Your coming down again. Therefore we bless and magnify You, O ascended Lord, with all our hearts, and rise after You as You draw us upward from groveling things. So be it! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 68; Ephesians 4:1-13.

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