

A GREAT SERMON BY THE GREATEST PREACHER

NO. 2409

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And lo, a voice came from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
Matthew 3:17.

A CERTAIN divine, who had taken this verse as his text, spoke upon it under these three heads. “First,” he said, “here is a great pulpit—the voice was from heaven. Secondly, here is a great preacher—it was the Father who spoke as only God can speak. And, thirdly, here is a great sermon—‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

I do not think that I could arrange my thoughts better than under these three divisions, that is to say, if I intended to preach at any length from the whole passage that I have taken as my text. It is from heaven that this voice comes. It is the voice of the Father, Himself, that speaks. And what the voice says is worthy to be treasured in the hearts of us all. “This—this man who has just come up dripping from the River Jordan, upon whom the Spirit, like a dove, descended and rested—this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

But, on this occasion I am going to say, first, that *the Father was well pleased with Christ*. Secondly, I want to ask the question, *are we well pleased with Him?* And then to answer, on behalf of many of you, “Yes, that we are! For we also can say of the Lord Jesus that with Him we are, indeed, well pleased.”

I. The first division is in the text itself—THE FATHER WAS WELL PLEASED WITH HIS BELOVED SON.

I find that the translation would be even more accurate if the passage read, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased.” Let us begin, then, with that thought—*the Father had been well pleased with His Son*. The past, rather than the present, though not to the exclusion of the present, seems to be intended in the Greek word here used—“This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased.” That is to say, “Before He was born here among men, before His first infant cry was heard at Bethlehem, before He was obedient to His parents at Nazareth, before He toiled in the carpenter’s shop, before He had reached the prime of His manhood and was able to come forth and to be dedicated to His sacred ministry in the waters of baptism—before that—I was well pleased with Him.” Yes, and we must go further back than that, for He “was” before He was here! “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” In those far-distant ages when the worlds were made, when matter and mind were spoken into existence by the creative Word of God, the Father took counsel with His beloved and equal Son. Jesus Christ as well as the Father was infinite wisdom—He balanced the clouds, weighed the hills, appointed the throbs of the tide and kindled the light of the sun! He was the Father’s Well-Beloved before the earth was! Yes, and in those primeval days, when as yet there was nothing but God—if your imagination can get back to the time when our great sun and the moon and stars slept in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup—in that eternity when there was no time, no day, no space, nor anything but God, the all-in-all, you will realize that even *then* the Only-Begotten was with the Father and in Him the Father was well pleased, for as God is eternal in His being, He is eternal in the trinity of His person! The Triune Jehovah is the theme of praise both on earth and in heaven! As we have often sung—

*“Holy, Holy, Holy Thee,
One Jehovah evermore,
Father, Son, and Spirit! We,
Dust and ashes, would adore!
Lightly by the world esteemed,*

*From that world by You redeemed,
Sing we here, with glad accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!
Holy, Holy, Holy! All
Heaven's triumphant choir shall sing
When the ransomed nations fall
At the footstool of their King!
Then shall saints and seraphim,
Harps and voices, swell one hymn,
Round the throne with full accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord."*

We cannot fully comprehend the great doctrine of the divine filiation, and the less we pry into it, the better. But certain it is that the Sonship of Christ does not imply any second position in order of time. As the Father was always the Father, so the Son was always the Son. Before all worlds and time, itself, He was with the Father, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. Now, dear friends, a love which has endured forever—which, even now, is eternal—since it had no beginning and can have no end, this is a mighty love, indeed! And it helps to make us wonder all the more that God should so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son, freighted with such love as this, to come down here and live, and die, that He might save a guilty race that had only just begun—an infant race of a few thousand years. It will forever be a marvel that the Father would have been willing to sacrifice the Eternal and Ever-blessed for the sake of such worthless creatures as these! Let your minds and hearts adoringly dwell, then, on that first view of the text, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased.”

Now read it, “The Father is well pleased with the Lord Jesus Christ always.” The, “I am,” of our version, containing, as it does, within itself the, “I was,” of the original, implies perpetuity and continuity. *God the Father is always pleased with His beloved Son.* There was never a time when He was otherwise than pleased with Him! Yes, He was pleased with Him even in Gethsemane, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He was pleased with Him when He gave Him up to be nailed to the cross of Calvary, for, though it pleased the Father to prove Him, and He did, for a while, hide His face from Him because of the necessary purposes of His atoning sacrifice, yet He always loved Him. I think that our Lord was never fairer to the eyes of His Father than when He was all ruddy with His bloody sweat. And that He never seemed lovelier to Him than when His obedient hands were given to the nails and His willing feet were fastened to the tree. Then must He have seemed to be God's rose and lily, first spotless, then all bloodied—the gathering up of all the loveliness of which only the infinite mind of God could conceive. The Well-Beloved was always dear to the Father—the Father was always well pleased with Him—and He is well pleased with Him now!

How little there is, even, about those of us who are the Lord's children which can please our heavenly Father, but God is always well pleased with Christ. We get to wandering away from Him. Our garments become defiled by sin. Sometimes the Lord has need to chide us and to chastise us, but as for His beloved Son, He is always well pleased with Him! And, blessed be His name, He is well pleased with us *in Him!* Oh, that we could always remember this glorious truth of God! Still, whatever we may be, the finger of the great Father always points to His dear Son in glory, and He says, “This, this is My beloved Son, in whom, notwithstanding all that His people do, I am always well pleased.”

Let me read the text again a little differently and say that *God is perfectly pleased with Christ.* He could not be more pleased with Him than He is and there could not be anything in Christ that would be more pleasing to the Father than what there already is in Christ. I believe that the Father is perfectly well pleased with Christ as God, with Christ as man, with Christ in the manger, with Christ preaching the Word throughout Judea, with Christ working miracles, with Christ in Pilate's Hall, with Christ upon the cross, with Christ in the grave, with Christ risen again, with Christ at His right hand and with Christ soon to come in the glory of His Second Advent. The Father is always perfectly pleased with His beloved Son. What the great Father's mind is, none of us can know, for the finite cannot measure the infinite. We have no standard that can apply to Him, but we are sure that it must need an infinite objective of delight to satisfy the infinite mind of the Father—and Christ fully satisfies it.

Sometimes, when I have been very earnestly pleading with the Father in prayer, I have felt as if I could cry, “Hear me, O God, hear me, O my Father, hear me for Your dear Son's sake!” And then I have changed my plea and said, “Look at Him! Are you not well pleased with Him? Was there ever such beauty as You see in Him? Was there ever such obedience as He rendered to You? Was there ever such truth, such holiness, such absolute perfection as you see in Him?” And I have felt that then I had a good

plea with God, for He is infinitely satisfied with His dear Son! There is nothing to satisfy God in all the worlds He has made—He could make as many more, in a moment, if He pleased. There is nothing to satisfy Him in anything that is merely spoken into existence. But with His other Self, His Only-Begotten, in every condition and in every case, from every point of view, He is well pleased and perfectly satisfied—and well He may be, for Christ is worthy of His Father’s satisfaction and delight.

Then further, to change our note, yet still to play much the same tune, *the Father is overflowingly pleased with Christ*. Can you catch my thought? The Father is not only pleased with Christ so much as to love Christ and to dwell in Christ, Himself, but He takes us up and He delights in us when we are in Christ because He has more delight in Christ than even Christ, Himself, can hold—and He wants more empty vessels into which to pour the rich wine of His soul’s delight. He loves Jesus so much that He can afford to love poor wretched sinners such as we are for Christ’s sake! He does, as it were, say to Himself, “I have filled the ocean bed of my dear Son’s nature with my divine love. Now bring here all the dried-up torrent-beds that you can find and I will fill them, also. Yes, bring here the dry Saharas, the wild deserts where never a drop of dew has fallen, and I will make them all to rejoice and blossom as the rose with this superfluity of love which I have to My dear Son! There is enough to make Me love, even the world, for His dear sake.” Our Lord Jesus has so won the infinite heart of the Most High that the divine love overflows to us!

Beloved, let us come and get under the drippings of this love! Here is Christ’s cup running over—let us draw near and drink from the overflow of the love of God to Jesus Christ. You men, you women, you have committed so much sin that God cannot love you in yourselves—you have so offended His infinite justice that His pure and holy nature repents that He ever made you! But look, look, I see another man come in, a man like ourselves, in every respect a true man, but such a man that when the great Father sees Him, He says to Him, “My Son, My Son, I am so delighted with You, the one perfect man, that for Your sake I am glad that I made men. I am delighted that I made them in Your image. You shall be the First-born among many brothers and sisters. For Your sake I will not destroy men from off the face of the earth. For Your sake, for the sake of that one man, My Fellow and yet man, I will bless the untold multitudes whom I have chosen before the foundation of the world, and whom I give to You to be the reward of Your soul’s travail, who shall be accepted in Your righteousness, loved because of My love to You and saved in Your salvation.” O sirs, if you had Paul or Apollos here to speak on such a theme as this, even *they* might fail to deal with it as it deserves! Only God the Holy Spirit can make us get even the *shadow* of an idea of how much God loves His Son and how ready He is to love us, also, and how truly He *does* love us who are in Him!

That God should *pity* me, I can understand, but that, for the sake of His dear Son, He should actually take a complaisant delight in me and *love* me, this is, indeed, wonderful! And His Son has so loved me that He has espoused me to Himself. Before the earth was, He chose me for His love—and now He loves me for His choice. Let this thought ravish your hearts—it is enough to do so! Before the daystar shot forth its first beams of light, the heart of Jesus Christ was set on you and He loves you, now, as much as He loved you, then, and He will always love you! When all the things that are shall have gone back into their natural non-existence, He will still love you with all the power of His infinite mind! No, He is not only espoused to you and bound to love you, but He has taken you into a marriage union of the most mysterious kind—and He will never be content till He shall eat the marriage feast with you and you shall sit down with Him and the chorales of the universe, every sigh and sorrow hushed to rest, and every joy let loose from the secret treasury of bliss! As the Lord Jesus lives in glory with His Father, so will He have you to be with Him at His right hand, to sit upon His throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon His throne!

I have also to say yet something more. *The Father is well pleased with His Son actively*. That is to say, His pleasure in His Son shows itself—He does something to honor His Son. When we pray, “Father, glorify Your Son,” that prayer is only a faint echo of God’s resolve and determination that He *will* glorify His Son. Can you picture that wondrous scene when He shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him—He that once was spat upon, crucified, dead and buried—can you imagine the splendors of that august moment when heaven shall empty out its legions of angels to accompany the returning Prince of the kings of the earth? Then shall sun and moon be ashamed and hide their diminished light, for the Lamb, Himself, shall shine with a brightness before which they shall be black as sackcloth of hair! Then, with the ten thousand times ten thousand of His Father’s courtiers who will come streaming out of heaven’s golden gates, He will sit upon the throne of His glory. I was going to try to picture the scene, but I could not possibly do it. I will only say, “Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the

King delights to honor,” while ten thousand, thousand trumpets blow to raise the sleeping dead—and quick and dead from sea and land stand before His dread tribunal and every eye shall see Him—and they that hated Him shall call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from His face! In that day shall it be seen how God has resolved to prove His good pleasure in His Son by giving Him glory, honor, majesty, dominion, power and might forever and ever. Yes, dear friends, God loves to glorify His Son! Here I must leave this part of my subject, for I want to come to a practical point in the latter portions of my discourse.

II. We have seen that the Father is well pleased with Christ. Now let me ask, in the second place, **ARE WE ALSO WELL PLEASSED WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?** Can we look at Him and say, “This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased”?

If so, listen to this. *Here is the point where God and our souls can meet.* God loves Jesus—so do we. The Lord delights to glorify Jesus—so do we. He will make all things subservient to the honor of Christ—so would we. God’s love is like the sun and we reflect its light just as little drops of dew that hang upon the blades of grass reflect it, but, as the dewdrop is agreed with the sun, so are we agreed with God. I like to feel that, notwithstanding all my imperfections and sin, I can meet God in Christ! Can you meet Him there, dear friends? I know that many of you can—what a blessed meeting place it is! Across that marred body of the spotless and lovely Jesus, God and man embrace one another! I am a sinner and the Father takes the sinner’s hand, and says, “I have forgiven you for My dear Son’s sake.” And we stand there and say, “Heavenly Father, we bless You for Jesus. “And He says, “I gave Him to bless you, I intended Him to bless you, and now I delight that you should bless Him and should praise His name.” You know that if you take us upon any other ground, there is a point of difference—God and man cannot agree until they come to the God-man, Christ Jesus—and then, where God and man have met in one person, and are joined together in an everlasting union, there God meets men and they are bound together in an alliance that shall never be broken! What a blessed thought this is! Our love to Christ enables us to find a meeting place with God in the person of His dear Son.

Well, next, can we say that we are well pleased with Christ? Then, as the Father says He is well pleased with Christ, *here is a place for cooperation as well as for union.* Now we can be laborers *together* with God, for this is a work in which we delight, and it is a work in which God also delights. See, brothers and sisters, you can go and try to show how much you love the Savior. And when you do that, God is also showing how He loves the Savior. If this is the work in which you engage, you are sure to have God with you. Suppose you were to adopt some highly ambitious projects—for instance, the formation of a religious sect, the building up of a confraternity of which *you* would be the head, with the objective of honoring and glorifying *yourself*—well, you would have to look a long while before you would have God with you! But if the one aim of your life is to glorify Christ, you know that God the Father is with you, for it is His ever-present desire to glorify Christ! If your ministry is full of Christ, it is a ministry that God can bless. “Oh,” said a brother to me, only today, speaking of a certain minister, “I could not hear him, for there is nothing of Christ in his sermons.” Where there is nothing of Christ, brothers and sisters, there is nothing of unction, nothing of savor—and a man is quite right not to attend such a ministry as that. Leave Christ out of your preaching and you have taken the milk from the children! You have taken the strong meat from the men. But if your objective as a teacher or preacher is to glorify Christ and to lead men to love Him, and trust Him, why, that is the very work upon which the heart of God, Himself, is set! The Lord and you are pulling together—and God the Holy Spirit can set His seal to a work like that! Is it not a marvelous thing that we should be workers together with God?

When He made the skies, we could not help Him. When He lit up the stars, we could not help Him. When He rules nations, we cannot help Him. But when He comes to glorify His Son, then we can be workers together with Him! It is by means of men, by the use of instruments, that Christ is to be glorified! And, therefore, here is a sphere for us in which our weakness stands side by side with omnipotence! Our folly is taught of divine wisdom and made to co-operate with omniscience! I bless the Lord that He said of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” for as we, also, are well pleased with Him, here is a blessed point of co-operation!

Once more, if we can say, “Yes, we are well pleased with Christ,” then we have before us *a fountain of pleasure.* Are you pleased with Christ? Then you may *always* be pleased! Are you well pleased with Christ? Then you shall never lose the source and spring of your pleasure! Not long ago you were well pleased with a dear wife, but she is gone, yet the Lord lives. It is but a little while ago that you were well pleased with a sweet child. The lamb has been caught away to the heavenly fold, but the Good Shepherd is with you always—you can still be well pleased with Him! A few years ago we were pleased with our

physical strength and with our youthful vigor. It is all gone, now, but Jesus is not gone—we can still be well pleased with Him! By-and-by, we may come into such stress of circumstances that all that pleased us shall be a dissolving view. Our wealth will leave us, or we shall leave it. All that lies below must be renounced, for a film is coming over the eyes and the breath is drawn with pain, and the spirit is about to depart to God who gave it. Ah, then, beloved, it will be a blessed thing to be well pleased with Jesus, for He will be with us in death, and with us throughout eternity! If you are well pleased with Christ, you have a fountain which neither frost can freeze nor heat can dry. We may be too well pleased with earthly friends and we may make idols of them, but we can never idolize Christ. We may worship Him, for He is God and He, therefore, deserves our homage and adoration. There is no fear that we can lavish too much affection upon His divine person. You may be well pleased with Him, and be still more pleased with Him, and be better pleased, and better pleased, still, with Him the older you grow! And in heaven, itself, you may still continue to be more and more completely taken up with Him, for is He not the river of pleasure which is at the right hand of God forever? Oh, yes! It is a blessed thing to have our good pleasure in Christ since it will endure world without end!

But, once again, if you can say of Christ that you are well pleased with Him, I think it suggests to you *a line of testimony*. People need, sometimes, to say a word to others to do them good. Do you not think that it would be a very easy thing, sometimes, to say, “I wish you would let me tell you of a friend of mine, and what He did for me”? You could not preach, perhaps, but you could, any one of you, tell the story of what Jesus did for you. “I do not know,” says one, “I should break down if I tried.” Well, that would not matter—it might be a grand thing to break down, as you might also break down the person to whom you were talking—and the two of you, breaking down, you might, perhaps, take to your knees and get nearer to God that way than in any other! I think that even the most humble Christian woman might find somebody, possibly of her own rank and sex, to whom she could say, “I would like to tell you about my dear friend.” Why, they might think they were going to hear a piece of gossip, you know! Perhaps they would lend their ears at once and then they would be surprised to find what a dear friend is Jesus. Possibly they would be wonder struck—at any rate, I am sure they would remember it better than they would a sermon from me, because it would come with a surprise power which would take possession of their thoughts! “Oh, but,” you say, “I could not speak that way.” I do not believe that you could hold your tongue if you really tried to speak for Jesus. I believe that if you once began, you would be obliged to go on. I have heard of a good woman who said that she could not come before the Church to tell of her love to Christ. And when they said, “Well, then, we think we cannot receive you,” she said, “But I could die for Him.” “Oh!” said the minister, “that is better than anything else that you could say. If you say you could die for Christ, come along with you, you have already said enough.” I do wish that, sometimes, as the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” you would break the silence, and say, “This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased—

*‘In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
And my heart leaps at the sound of His name.’*

“I must tell somebody. I cannot keep such a good thing all to myself.” I suggest it to you as a line of testimony, very simple and very easy to sincere-hearted persons, that you should imitate the Great Father in this respect and publicly or privately, according as you have opportunity, express your love to Christ.

If anybody in this Tabernacle can say, “Yes, I am well pleased with Christ, I delight in Him,” I think that fact may be to you *a very blessed token for good*. Faith in Christ ought to come first and I used to think it always did. But I correct myself as I go on learning. I meet with a great many persons who have a very sincere love to Christ, which love does not bring them any comfort, or bring them salvation, either, because they have not learned to *trust* Christ. The trust in Christ that saves the soul is not admiration of His person or even love of Him—it is faith in His atoning sacrifice, reliance upon His finished work. And if you are relying upon Him, you can then say, “I love Him, I delight in Him, I rejoice in everything about Him, He is very dear to me.” Well now, how came this about? It is the work of grace in your soul, for by nature we are enemies to God by wicked works, and if there is in your heart a trustful love for Jesus, so that you are well pleased with Him—depend upon it, the Spirit of God has been at work in your soul and you are a new creature in Christ Jesus! The kind of faith that I have seen in some, and which I am sure is good sound faith, is this. One said, “I believe myself to be the most unworthy creature who ever lived, and I cannot understand why God should have the slightest love to such a wretch as I am. But I do trust myself on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart, and I feel an inward union to Him. I love Him, and I long to be with Him, and somehow I feel certain that He will never cast me into hell.” No, dear heart, how could He? How could He cast out one who loved Him?

How could He cast out one who trusted Him? What? Shall it be said in hell, “Here is a sinner who trusted the Savior”? Never! What? Shall they say, “Here is one in the unquenchable fire who was united to God in Christ Jesus”? It is impossible! Such a thing can never be! Therefore have no fear about it. With this trust in Christ you may live, you may die, you may rise again, and you may stand in the day of judgement! If you are well pleased with Christ, God is well pleased with you. If you delight in Christ, God delights in you. This is a seal of the Spirit of God upon His work in your heart and you may go away and rejoice.

Only take notice of this one thing. Imitation is the sincerest form of admiration and if you really, *trustfully*, love the Savior, you will endeavor to be like He. It will be your desire at all times to tread in His footsteps. “Well,” says one, “I sincerely hope that I may do so. May the Holy Spirit help me! But one thing I know, I rejoice in my dear Savior’s name.” I can say that, too, yet, when I get home, tonight, it is very likely that I shall feel very, very, very weary and possibly, all of a sudden, a spirit of depression will come over me. It often does when one is very weary. And then I fall back on this fact—I did my best to extol my Master. I have preached nothing else but Christ and—

*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die,”*

and He will not cast me away! I have no hope but in Him and He cannot put me away!

O dear souls, cling to my Lord! If you cannot do that, look to my Lord, trust to my Lord, be well pleased with my Lord and my Lord shall be well pleased with you! I do not ask of you a difficult thing, for, if ever there was One with whom we ought to be well pleased, it is the Son of God, who became the Son of Mary, that He might save us from our sins! Oh, think much of that wondrous love of His! If we do not admire it and love Him for it, surely our hearts are turned to stone! May God break them and give us new ones—and enable us henceforth to love Christ with all our heart, mind, soul and strength! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 2; MATTHEW 3.*

Psalm 2:1-3. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

The conspiracy was both strong and influential. The kings and the rulers combined against Jehovah and against His Christ. They were very determined. They set themselves with resolute purpose. They took counsel together. They were full of a horrible enthusiasm—they raged—they thought the work as good as done, but they imagined a vain thing. The fight was against Jehovah and against His anointed, the Christ, the Messiah! What came of it all? Did they break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from them? Listen—

4. *He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*

For what can mortals be as compared with the Eternal? The fire can readily enough consume the twigs. Shall men set themselves in opposition to omnipotence and hope to prosper? And when God determines to glorify His anointed Son, shall worms of the dust prevent Him from doing so? What can come of all their opposition? God simply laughs at them, Jehovah has them in derision!

5. *Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.*

He scarcely needs to lift His hand! He has only to speak and when Jehovah speaks in wrath, His words are thunderbolts! Men’s hearts are indeed troubled when God’s words come hot with anger into their spirits. This is what God said—

6. *Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.*

“You have raged, you have deliberated, you have resolved, but it is all nothing! There is My Son, the crowned King.” And such is the anointed tonight—the Christ is on the throne—let His enemies say what they will, He must reign, nothing can prevent it! He must be King of kings and Lord of lords, for thus is it written concerning Him.

7. *I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.*

This is the seal of the Anointed. He is the Son of the Highest, the only-begotten Son of the Father, who says to Him, “You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.”

8. *Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.*

Christ is asking of His Father—even He cannot have what He desires without asking for it! Prayer is so essential to the progress of the kingdom of Christ that even Christ, Himself, must ask! But then God has promised to give to Christ the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth to be His possession. This is the great strength of all missionary enterprise. Dear friends, we may be quite sure that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord when we read such a text as this—“I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” If men will not yield to the Lord when He is made known to them; if they resist the drawings of divine love, what will happen? Listen—

9, 10. *You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces, like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.*

“You rulers, you magistrates, you senators, you governors of the earth, be wise, be instructed.”

11. *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

“If you are wise, you will obey the superior King—you will yield obedience to the great Lord of all.”

12. *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.*

The kings and rulers are bid to do this—let each one of *us* do the same—let us give the kiss of homage to Him whom God has made to be our King and take Him to be our Lord and Ruler forever and ever.

12. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.*

It is so. Those of us who have tried it can bear our witness that it is so—there is no life like a life of trust in God. The nearest approach to heaven that we can live in this mortal body is a life of simple confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now let us read concerning our Lord’s first coming and appearance among the sons of men. Turn to the gospel according to Matthew, at the third chapter.

Matthew 3:1, 2. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

There is no entering the kingdom of heaven without leaving the kingdom of darkness! We must repent of sin, or we cannot receive the blessings of salvation! Of every man, whoever he may be, whether outwardly moral or openly wicked, repentance is required. It is the door of hope—there is no other way into the kingdom—“Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

3, 4. *For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a belt about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

His raiment and his food were like his doctrine—rough and simple. There was no mincing of words, no making of pretty phrases with John the Baptist! His message was simply, “Repent you: repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is coming.” We need more of this John the Baptist teaching nowadays, that men may be plainly told their faults, and warned to put away those faults that they may receive Christ Jesus as their Savior!

5-7. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

These were the influential people of the times—the Pharisees were the Ritualists of that age, and the Sadducees were the Rationalists of the period. Why, John, you ought to have smoothed your tongue, a bit, and have said some very pleasant words to these great men, for, by so doing, perhaps you might have won some of these Pharisees, or coaxed some of these Sadducees into the kingdom! Ah, no, that is not John’s method! He is plainspoken, and he deals truthfully with his hearers, for he knows that converts made by flattery are but flattering converts that are of no real value!

8, 9. *Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within ourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham!*

Pointing to the stones in the River Jordan and all along the banks, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “There is nothing, after all, in your natural descent from Abraham. God has promised that Abra-

ham shall have a seed, but think not that He is dependent upon *you* for that seed—He can fulfill His promise without you! He can turn the very pebbles of the stream into children for Abraham! God is not short of men to save. If some of you will not have Him, do not think that He shall have to come a-begging to you. There are others who will have Him and His rich sovereign grace will find them! Beware, you that are proud and think much of yourselves, for God will not humble Himself for you! He has regard to the humble and the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off.”

10-12. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

The Christ is the minister of mercy, but there is about His doctrine a searching and a trying power! Only the sincere in heart can endure Christ’s winnowing fan. As for the insincere, they are blown away like the chaff on the threshing floor—their end is destruction! God give us to be numbered among the wheat that Christ shall gather into His heavenly garner!

13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and come You to me?*

It seemed very strange that John, the servant, should be required to baptize Jesus, the Master.

15. *And Jesus answering said unto Him, allow it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.*

That is to say the Teacher must, Himself, obey the laws which He is about to lay down. And, inasmuch as He is going to bid others to be baptized, He will set the example and be, Himself, baptized! I think, also, that the baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work which He afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering. He died and was buried in the tomb. He rose again from the grave—and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of His baptism in the River Jordan!

16, 17. *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

And we are well pleased with Him, too.

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