

OUR LORD'S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS

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“Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”
Micah 5:4

THERE can be no doubt but what the prophet here spoke of the Messiah—of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, “Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth.” This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater really than He always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, He is infinite in glory and can be no greater.

As King of kings and Lord of lords, His glory fills immensity. Before Him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that, as we look up to Him, we can both rejoice in Him as our brother, and be humbled in His presence when we reflect that He is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than He now is. He is “God over all, blessed for ever.”

The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, and hearts, and understandings of men, as He is at all times really great in Himself. When we read in the text, “Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth,” we may remember that *He is already great in heaven*. Albeit that man rejects Him—painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard His name and that multitudes more only know it to revile it—yet there is a place where His name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in heaven are set to the melodies of His praise. No one of “the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above” but is to extol and magnify Him. They delight to do Him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds and the love of many waxes cold. There is at least one shrine where He is always adored—one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes Him—where He is loved, adored, and revered by every creature.

And it is also sweet to remember that, although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet He is exceedingly *great in the hearts of the multitudes of His people*. When we meet here tonight, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshippers of the Crucified. At this moment the sacred song is going up from tens of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the Continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea, men of our own kith and kin love Him as we do. Nay, nay, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God.

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of His praises, and adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts, that never could be trodden by the foot of man—and Jesus Christ's name has been made known—at least as a witness against the people, even where it has not been received by the people.

Little is the light, but we thank God we have some light! Few there be that find the narrow road, but still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus—the way, the truth, and the life. “The whole world lies in the wicked one,” but like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the

Christian church. Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great—and shall be great in time and in eternity.

But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world—north, south, east, and west—Jesus Christ shall yet be made great, and we will speak of this tonight, first, *by showing that He deserves to be great*. Then by reminding you that *God has decreed that He shall be great*. Thirdly, by asking you, my brethren, *whether you do not also agree with that decree*, and now, in His strength, *that you will make Him great*. And then I shall close by asking *whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to His dominion, shall tonight come and acknowledge His sway, that they also may feel and proclaim His greatness unto the ends of the earth*.

In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that—

I. JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE MADE GREAT!

Oh! my brethren and sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior's blood and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the Substitute. What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the Eternal One, "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich"?

Does the world ring with the name of the *Conqueror*? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah! well, if a conqueror's name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars, who ever devastated the world, for He has overcome that which overcame them.

Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long ere he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin and overcome it, leading it captive at His chariot wheels.

Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew. Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble. But my Lord and Master has conquered death.

*“He, hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin o’erthrew,
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew.”*

My Master met Satan face to face and put His foot upon his neck. He met sin and trod it as men tread grapes in the winepress. He met death itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, and rolled away the stone, and proclaimed a resurrection to the buried sons of men. This Conqueror is, and well does He deserve to be, made great.

Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a *deliverer*. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved encomium on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel and of Louis Napoleon—and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant's chain.

It is said that when Macedonia was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games, and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of "Sotea" or "Savior," and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished. 'Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a savior comes to deliver them from bondage.

But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God. The fetters He has broken are the fetters of your souls. The dungeons from which He delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire. The rescue that He brings you is not for this life only, but for the life to come. As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings.

Sound, sound His name abroad! Daughters of music, give Him your sweetest notes. See, the triumphant Hero comes! Now let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that He has done. He deserves to be great, both as Conqueror and as Deliverer.

In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are *full of learning*. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow man when he has threaded the stars, and walked with his staff above, and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin.

But what shall I say of my Lord, for in Him dwells all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"? To know Him is life and by His knowledge shall His righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom. His name is "wisdom." Solomon, the wise one, called Him so. He is wisdom without faintest folly, knowledge without mistake. Oh! let Him, then, be made great.

Great *discoverers, too*, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly terms. 'Twas well done, good sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought!

But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but heaven and earth. He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the Eternal One, who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through Him we can speak with God and through Him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery and the sigh of our grief.

Oh! brethren, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph. "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged. As far as hell is from heaven was man from God, but Christ has bridged the chasm. The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other—and they stood between us and God—but the cross has tunneled the mountains and there is now a highway for souls to come to God. Now shall he be great indeed, if He gets His just deserts.

Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great *who show great generosity*. She is great who goes into the hospital, devoting the prime of her days to the relieving of human misery. He is truly great who, having acquired wealth, gave it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gives it up as freely as he won it and who lives untrammelled by the smiles or frowns of kings, and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world's hero, whom we all delight to honor.

But oh! my Master, my Lord Jesus as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars. He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but He gave Himself, His heart, His soul, His deity. He gave such a jewel for us that, if heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it. He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity.

Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital—this huge leper house, the world—and He Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses, and by His stripes we are healed. Speak of the unselfishness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow men? What had Christ to gain? Oh! you lamps of heaven, what had He to gain? Your splendor was enough for Him. What could He win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spit on His cheeks, and the scourging on His shoulders?

It was for the love of His enemies, the love of those who hated and despised Him, and nailed Him to the cross—it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth. He deserves to be great and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know Him.

*“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”*

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can rival it or that can be mentioned in the same breath. Oh! men, it was for you He lived! Oh! men, it was for you He died!

The angels love Him, though for them He laid not down His life—and shall men alone be dumb, or earth alone fast close her mouth and refuse to praise Him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as—

II. A SOLEMN PURPOSE AND DECREE ON THE PART OF GOD.

Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshipped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols He shall utterly abolish. The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Mohametans than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The Papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away.

Everything that stands in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. Brethren, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind.

It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that He will. We are to live anticipating His coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when He does come. That is the practical bearing of the doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled, which seem to show that He is not coming just now.

I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but still, He *must* be great unto the ends of the earth. Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of His Gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, nay, it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands.

I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, He should not bless the whole congregation. I do not see any reason why, if He blesses the preaching of the Word here, He should not bless it everywhere. No, I see a great many reasons why He should and I hope that He will do it—and that Pentecost will be outdone, until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result. Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits. It was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf only and surely the harvest is to be much more than that. Let us, then, expect far greater things than even Pentecost knew.

We would not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France—that the Gospel has spread all down the Apennines—that the truth, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end. That Turkey has submitted to the cross. That the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion, that the multitudes of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva, and bowed before Christ. That Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the Man of Nazareth is the teacher of millions in that strange people—that from Eastern Coast to Western—the people have set their faces towards Christ and desire to learn concerning Him.

We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by. There may be giants yet again and the Gospel which has crept along at a steady pace may yet

take to itself its great power, and swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of truth shall fly the whole world over. This, then, is God's purpose and decree, "Now, shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here—

III. WHETHER, AS THIS IS GOD'S DECREE, IT HAS NOT OFTEN ALSO BEEN THE EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS?

When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make Him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our next friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth.

Ah! we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon and say, "Yes, I have been loved much, and having had much forgiven, in God's name, I will love Him much in return. And as far as I can, I will make His name great."

Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very house of prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stay here forever. It has been like heaven below to us, and then we have said, "Oh! what will I not give Him? I will consecrate my substance. I will use my tongue, my mind, my hand—I will do anything for Him—He has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it. I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior He is."

Oh! I wish that we had come to this and that we not only said it, now and then, but that it was our prayer, night and day, and the one comfort of our hearts. Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the Heart-Searching One, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great.

I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling, I thank God, that, if it would more honor Him to cast me where He wills, if I might but be permitted to love Him, and He will but love me, the thing may be done and He shall have all the praise.

While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind, and instead of preaching, he was compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, "Then I am to understand that, as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before—and so it has been God that has spoken to me," and this thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh! it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a byword—if Christ were but lifted up thereby.

When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth's sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier's trick, but for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations and even their very lives to make Christ glorious—this is the only truly Christian way of living. God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self.

I saw a good Christian brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed, but when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories, which were made up against him. I said to him, "I see you have got something that no evangelist can afford to have." "What is that?" said he. "Why," was the reply, "you have got a good reputation and you must get rid of it for Christ's sake, that is to say, live a holy life and then let men call you 'devil' if they like, let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master. Contend for Him and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast, and as the offscouring of all things, if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ forever."

I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point. We mean, God helping us, to hold fast to this and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth.

And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question—

IV. ARE THERE NOT SOME HERE TONIGHT IN WHOM JESUS CHRIST MAY BE MADE GREAT?

Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong and who have got a very good righteousness of your own—I do not ask you to glorify Christ—because you cannot. If I wanted to praise up some doctor and said, “Now, here he is—he can cure all diseases. Will you come and help him to get a name?” I should know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him.

So when Christ's name is to be lifted up and we want to preach Him so that He may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us. Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunk and wash out his mouth, and make a sober man of him and a Christian—would not that make Christ to be exalted?

And ah! if there should be, even here, a woman of an evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make her chaste and honorable—oh! how great it would make Him to become! And if some black villain has crept in here and one who has said of himself that there is no hope of his being converted and no mercy possible for him—supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus, and then suppose he become a preacher of His Gospel—would that not make Christ's name to be made great?

John Newton was once the vilest of the vile, and oh! it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the cross which he had so ribaldly blasphemed! And oh! may God make London wonder yet again, by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the Gospel of His grace. Why should He not do it? He has often done it. Are you willing and anxious that He should do it again? Then cry to Him and He will do it.

Perhaps there is one here who has been a backslider. Ah! backslider, you can make Christ's name great if you come back to Him! Mr. Whitfield's brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at tea one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, “I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man.”

The Countess put down the tea and said, “I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitfield. I am glad to hear it!” “Madam,” said he, “I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing so terrible as that.” “I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitfield,” she said, “for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.” His eyes sparkled and he said, “I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart.” He died that night and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting Him, for He came to seek and to save the lost?

Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the kirk was very full and that many people were standing outside, so she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him—she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done tonight—and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all you ends of the earth.”

“Oh!” said the woman, “is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!” She looked, according to the gracious command and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved. Oh! I wish He could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth! I feel as if I could give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!

The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth. He has ridden you and will ride you down to hell yet! Will you never kick against him? Oh! that Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle and say, "You shall go no further," so turning you into a new course and making you willing in the day of His power.

Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ's name great. I remember hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some fifty years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called, "The Hell-Fire Club."

The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn into a fresh blasphemy and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the public-house.

The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin, and Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was not, and who had not committed it—and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin. That man became a Christian and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that "The Hell-Fire Club" began to feel that Jesus Christ's name was great.

I wish that some of you who are practically hell-fire men and women might become heaven's men and women, and become so tonight! Oh! it would be a fine thing if you went home and your wife should find you saying—instead of cursing and swearing—"I think we must pray"! How struck she would be!

There is a good woman here now with her husband—I think they are both to be received into fellowship tonight—and what a happy time it was for her—though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ—when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too.

You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet—and soon she asked how it had all come about—and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh! I wish He would meet with some of you! He has, in His love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.

Let us all pray this short prayer—

*"Oh! Sovereign grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too:
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His Word."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

REVELATION 12

Verse 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

This is that woman of whom the promise runs, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places. He saw the church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of divine light about her, with all that is variable, changeable as "the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown" that her Lord had given her—twelve patriarchs, twelve prophets, twelve apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from heaven.

2. *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

That child that is born of her, that seed of the woman, that shall bruise the serpent's head is, first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom He is the great representative.

3-4. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth."

The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John's dream sprang, has great force in its tail and Satan, doubtless of old, drew from heaven a number of its stars—other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the church when the ministers fall—they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God are into darkness and become teachers of heresy. "He did cast them down to the earth." They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." Remember how he sought to slay Jesus, and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the child—the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the Gospel, he would not care about the church one whit—the woman might go if the man-child could be destroyed.

5. *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

That is the brief history of the birth of Christ and of His going from us. He "was caught up unto God, and to his throne." God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, He will find it a refuge in heaven.

6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days.*

The church of God was long in obscurity. You can hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mounts. The Wycliffites, and the Lollards, and others, held fast the truth, but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden away for many a day.

"And there was war in heaven." You are not to think of "heaven" as a place, but among the heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

7-8. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." His power among the heavenlies is gone. He was cast out of the place called heaven. So is he now, by the preaching of the Gospel and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

9. *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up and His Gospel gets the victory.

10. *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

Always at it! this prince of evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted now to stand in the court—he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

11-12. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

“Therefore rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them. But the battle is not over—the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

We may expect him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant—he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected and let God be glorified for it.

13. *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

He had changed his place, but he did not change his nature—and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

14-15. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.*

Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the Gospel of Christ.

16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has overruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the church. It was so in Luther's day. The jealousy that was felt of the influence of the Court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those round about him, so that the Gospel was not destroyed.

“The earth helped the woman,” and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all tend that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can overrule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth—she has nothing to do with that—let the church leave the State alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political providence of God the earth helps the woman.

17. *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ.*

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman.” If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing. But if it is a true church of God—if it holds the truth and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed.”

He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface. God bless the reading to us.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.