

No.
97.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD,
OPPOSED TO
A "DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES"
Falsely So-Called.

An Address (revised) at

East Ham,

31st January, 1917.

by

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Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
East Ham, 31st Jan. 1917.

GOD has a purpose. Simple words, but oh how full their meaning to any who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Yes, beloved friends, God has a purpose. He is not controlled by circumstances, He is not overruled by arrangements. God has HIS purpose, and God will work out His purpose, and the Scripture has been graciously given that His children, with anointed eyes, may have an unveiling of His purpose, and, seeing that which He has set forth, may rejoice in His truth, and desire that others as well may rejoice in the same.

I was interested to notice the various words which are used in the Later Scriptures to indicate God's plan BEFOREhand. There is no mere AFTER-thought with God. We read that He FORE-knew, that He PREdestinated, or marked off beforehand. We are reminded that the Scripture FOREseeing preached BEFORE the Gospel unto Abraham. Nor can we forget the very word "PROPhecy" indicates GOD SPEAKING BEFORE.

And what is the term "purpose"? It is a PLACING BEFORE. A PLACING with a real fixity, of that which God INTENDS to be carried out, and it WILL be carried out, for all the power of men, and the might of demons, yea, the strength of Satan himself,

cannot overturn one Word of God. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Man's VIEW of God's purpose is small. Indeed the NATURAL man receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But when God in mercy, grants a new eyesight, when He causes the fulfilment of the words in an individual experience "You hath He quickened", then there is a perception of that Divine plan, and should be an INCREASING perception, until in a day soon to dawn, there will be a realization, as never before, of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! No MAN hath known the mind of the Lord. There hath not COME UP on the heart of man the things which God hath made ready, but God HATH revealed much to His people, and those who know His Name can meet, not as those who in a ruined world are without a guide and without a chart, but meet as those who, in mercy, accept the Scriptures as God's revelation, impressed upon their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and have there His setting forth of that which He will do. Hence it is therefore to the Scriptures that we shall look this evening.

The opening words have a music and a power. - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Simple, yet grand, is that testimony. We are not given a bare treatise, contrived in human wisdom, to prove the necessary existence of God, but we have brought before us a display of a Personal God as Creator, a Personal God Who has almighty power, and Who,

with His infinite wisdom, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth. In this opening verse there is a wealth of meaning as to the very nature of God, for the noun for God is plural, and the word "created" is singular, as if to suggest to us there is that beyond human understanding and human parallel, in the very nature of God. Triune, ^{but} yet One God. We have the same testimony in Deut. 6. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God (the word "God" is plural) is One Lord (singular)". This verse, misused by Israel, sets forth the same instruction. And as in the very opening words of Scripture we have such fulness, farther on, in the first chapter still, we soon read, God said, Let US make man.

Again, if in Gen. 1. 1 we also see the unfolding of God's work as to heaven and earth, in Gen. 1. 2 there is a striking change. The heaven is unmentioned, but we read "The earth BECAME without form and void", for the word "was" is more literally, "became". "The earth BECAME without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep". Here we have FOUR words which suggest ruin. The word "void" is only twice elsewhere used by God in the original Scriptures. In both cases it is with the word here rendered "without form". In Isa. 34. 11 we have the translation "emptiness"; in Jer. 4. 23 "void". In both instances is it associated with judgment. The word "darkness" moreover, implies a similar thought. And the "deep" is oftentimes related to judgment. Four words to suggest something has gone wrong. Accept the real meaning of the word rendered "was", accept its true force as "became", and all is clear. God says

in Isa. 45. 18 that He did NOT create the earth "without form". The very term is there employed. Here is His Own testimony. He did not create it so, therefore it must have BECOME so. But God did not leave earth. It became so BEFORE man was created upon it, therefore it must have been linked with another's sin. There was no man to have committed the sin. Adam was "the first man", there was no man before. But when God in His wonderful wisdom first established the earth we are distinctly told in Job, that the morning stars sang together, and ALL the sons of God shouted for joy. But the first chapter of the same book of Job reminds us that when the sons of God came to present themselves before God, Satan came among them, and Gen. 6 also emphasizes the thought that among the angels who are thus characterized, there WAS a fall; and thus we have an allusion in Gen. 1, it would seem, to the sin of Satan, - and the earth became without form and void. Is it a surprise, therefore, that when man was created upon the earth, and man was given the sovereignty of earth, Satan at once sought to wreck the arrangement? The earth had been brought to confusion before, through Satan's sin, and Satan would lead man to sin. And Satan succeeded, but he realised not the glory of a purpose beyond his power to break. He knew not the fulness of God's wisdom. The Lord Jesus Christ takes up the threads of history, and He WILL yet bring the blessing to the earth which has been desolated through Satan, and desolated through man. God did not leave earth in its sorrowful condition. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light". Just prior to this we see "THE

SPIRIT OF GOD moved upon the face of the waters". Here is true history. We have ALSO a wondrous picture of what takes place when a sinner is saved even now. We have the authority of Scripture as to this parallel, for in 2 Cor. 4 the apostle, alluding to Gen. 1 says, "God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". If you look to the context there, you will find a reference to the work of Satan bringing about a darkness. "But God" (Eph. 2.4) Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness on earth, causes a light to shine in the ruined darkness of the sinner's heart. God says "Let there be light", and thanks be unto Him there is light. How grateful should all be who have experienced this causing of light in THEIR OWN hearts.

Heb. 11. 3 also refers to this wondrous passage in Genesis. "By FAITH we understand that the worlds were framed" is the usual rendering; - more literally, "the ages have been fitted together". It is not the term for "worlds", but that which would naturally be rendered "ages". "The ages were fitted together" by a SPOKEN Word of God, so that "things which are seen have not come into existence out of things which appear". In other words there is no evolution. There was at first Divine creation, and then, after ruin came in, God spoke. Earth did not set itself right. There was no evolution. The ages were fitted together by a SPOKEN word of God. And what was that spoken word? "Let there be light". And thus the ages were fitted together. The age of desolation in Gen. 1. 2, is

followed by the fresh age - God's appointment of earth for man, since in six days the Lord **MADE** heaven and earth. You will notice how the word "created" is left out in Exod. 20. 10. "In the beginning God created", then there comes the gap, and then we approach after the age of darkness, the age when God, putting earth straight, **CREATED** man, and gave man an appointment which man so soon broke. Thus we have, beloved friends, part of the suggestion from the Scripture that there are ages, and all Scripture illustrates this, and God has a **PURPOSE** through the ages which is again and again brought before us in the Later Scriptures. For example, in Eph. 1 we read, "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath **purposed** in Himself; that, in the dispensation of the **FULNESS** of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ". Here is a dispensation which is **YET FUTURE**. In the third chapter we read "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, ("the purpose of the ages", more literally) which He **purposed** in Christ Jesus our Lord". This stress on the ages is illustrated earlier in the chapter, for in verse 9 we read, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God Who created all things by Jesus Christ". More literally it reads, "The fellowship (or the stewardship) of the mystery which hath been hidden **FROM THE AGES**", and Col. 1. 26 reads "The mystery which hath been hid **FROM THE AGES**, and from the generations". In accord with this, Rom. 16. 25

in its ascription of praise, words it thus, "But to Him That is of power to have established, according to my Gospel, and the heralding of Jesus Christ, according to an unveiling of a mystery having been silenced in times eternal", (including the thought of "times linked with ages"), "but was now manifested, and through writings of prophets (prophetic writings), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known with a view to the obedience of faith unto all the nations". These Scriptures are a few among many which refer to the ages. Do not think it strange to notice this part of Scripture revelation. In Eph. 2 we are distinctly told that there are ages TO COME. "For in the ages to come God will show what is the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness on to us in Christ Jesus". The present evil age is before us, not only in Gal. 1. 4, but in Eph. 2 we read that men walk according to the course of this world, literally - "the age of this world"; and so believers are instructed NOT to be conformed to this age (Rom. 12. 2). In 2 Cor. 4. 4 Satan is distinctly called "the god of THIS AGE". Our translation "of this world" misses the meaning, for there is a distinct term rendered "world", as any concordance which differentiates will show. Yes, there are the ages. Realize this and it will help to clear away many difficulties which exist in many minds. Men speak lightly and glibly of the end of the world, and they ask when it will be, and they look to expressions as those in Matthew's Gospel, but there we have literally "The end of the age". After the end of the present age, there is to be a thousand years literal reign of the Lord

Jesus upon this earth. It is not till the END of the day of the Lord that the elements will melt with fervent heat, as 2 Pet. 3 sets forth. Glib speaking of the end of the world quite misses the Divine unveiling. Scripture is wondrously solemn and precious.

But we turn back to Gen. 1. Here we behold the beginning of certain ages, and God has a purpose to work out through the ages. His purpose may be hidden awhile as we have seen; it may be silenced, but it is there. It is no afterthought with Him. The apostle says, "In other generations it was not made known AS it is now made known", and that is true. In 1 Cor. 2.8 he distinctly tells us that none of the princes of THIS AGE knew God's wisdom. He has previously asked the solemn question, "Where is the disputer of this age?" Mark now the force of the words - "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages (rather than "before the world") before the ages UNTO OUR GLORY. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it come up upon the heart of man the things which God made ready for those that love Him", and why do they love Him? 'Tis all by grace. "All things work together for good to them that love God, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE". Let His PURPOSE be exalted, for if any of us are by grace among the called of Jesus Christ, it is because of a PURPOSE of love, since in man by nature there is nothing good, he is only evil continually. All are corrupt and have done abominable works, dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope and without God in the world. It is only because God is rich in mercy that poor, guilty sinners, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, are

brought near unto Him out of darkness into His marvellous light, and caused to live with an eternal life. It is the grace of God that any are born from above to-day. But God had His purpose in Gen. 1, even though its full fruition seems so long. God has His purpose, though it was not till the fulness of time that God sent forth His Son. With Him a thousand years is as one day, and one day as a thousand years; yea, it is but a watch in the night. The mightiness of God is parallel with the wondrous knowledge of God. All things are naked and laid bare before Him; and He has said, "My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure". He alone can declare the end from the beginning, for He has His purpose throughout all. ONE part of that purpose is particularly with respect to this earth. Listen to the testimony of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 25, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", - "From the FOUNDATION (literally, casting down) of the world" - and that term CAN also refer very definitely to the confusion into which earth came, and the putting of it straight. From the foundation of the world, says the Lord Jesus, the Kingdom was prepared for the ones He welcomes. That kingdom is definitely linked with the putting of earth straight for man. But is there a kingdom before us in Gen. 1.? Undoubtedly. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them; and God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and HAVE DOMINION over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth

upon the earth". Here is GOD'S appointment of DOMINION. Here is a kingdom; but the first man fails, and we find a very definite hint of this failure, not only in the silence as to man's control of the animals after the fall, but also in the striking words to Noah in chapter 9 "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air, and surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it". Man is here no longer viewed as possessing the dominion. The beast may kill a man. Man's sovereignty is partly put on one side. Man has failed! Adam sold himself for nought; hence the apostle speaking of the flesh says "Sold under sin". Accordingly when Satan comes and attacks the Lord Jesus Christ, we have these words concerning the world - "To me it has been betrayed". What does this mean? To what is Satan alluding? He is referring to the authority of kingdoms of the world. "To whomsoever I will I give it, because to me it has been betrayed". That is the literal term. "Delivered", if you will. But it is the same term as "Betrayed", and Satan emphasized this aspect which he well knew, and Christ did not deny his claim. But Christ came to expel the usurper, and afterwards the words of the Lord Jesus sounded forth "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be CAST OUT". Christ thereby declared Satan's terrible position as the prince of this world at that time. Cf. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath NOTHING in Me". The Lord Jesus Christ was the Undefeated One. Adam lost the sovereignty. Noah had only a measure of it in Gen. 9; and unto the ANGELS God hath not put in subjection the

world to come whereof we speak, BUT, we remember Heb. 2, One in a certain place testifieth, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Psalm 8 continues "Thou madest HIM a little lower than the angels". Heb. 2 explains "lower a little time than the angels", for the Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself when He became a Man. He was in nature higher than the angels, but for a little while He was made lower than the angels. Then we behold Him "Crowned with glory and honour". It is written, "Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands, Thou hast put all things under His feet; all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea". Have you observed that in Gen. 1 the fish are mentioned first, and here they are mentioned as a climax? Accordingly the Lord Jesus wrought special miracles with respect to FISH, proving His dominion. "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught". To feed the five thousand and the four thousand He used bread AND fish. When Peter had spoken unadvisedly with respect to the temple tax, the Lord instructed him to go down to the sea, and to take up a fish and he would find a "standard" coin within it, "Give unto them for Me and thee". The Lord will have dominion over the fish of the sea, and He THEN marked it out. Yes, at the very time when Satan attacked Him and said, The kingdom of earth had been betrayed, we are expressly told He was with the wild beasts, and as if to mark out His glory, we are also reminded that ANGELS ministered unto Him.

Yes, beloved friends, the PURPOSE of God brought before us in Gen. 1, as to the earth, and a kingdom on the earth, has not been ruined through man's failure. God will head up all things in Christ, as Eph. 1 has told us. The purpose is IN CHRIST as Eph. 3 sets forth. We read in John 17, that the Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father said, Glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. He therefore asked that there might be a reinstatement. Why? NO creature could have spoken thus, but He, being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but took upon Him the form of a servant, and became in the likeness of men. He took upon Him this form. We read, "He emptied Himself", but He was still HIMSELF. Hence the wondrous words, "Unto us a Child is born ... His Name shall be ... The Mighty GOD". I will raise a Branch unto David, and this is His Name - "The LORD our Righteousness". "Of Whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Who is over all, GOD Blessed for ever". "In the beginning WAS the Word and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh". Thus we see, marked out very definitely, the two natures of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He WAS God and He BECAME flesh. He emptied Himself, but was still Himself. Hence in Hebrews 9 we are told that when HE offered Himself, He was Offerer as well as Offering. How was it that He Who died could yet offer at the same time? Through AN ETERNAL SPIRIT He offered Himself without spot. He had an Eternal Spirit, since Over all, God Blessed for ever. For Christ is

not a bare man, He is not a created being. He is (I would repeat it) over all God Blessed for ever, Who became Man, and was found in the likeness of man. Yes, in flesh, and in the LIKENESS of sinful flesh, but NEVER sinful even in tendency; that He through death might completely put out of working order him that had the power of death, that is the devil; that He might grant to His people a glorious share in the glory which God had purposed, for we, if we are believers, have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love. We are predestinated, - the term is a Divine one.

There are those who will tell us that predestination, - or, shall I say, election and FREE grace are opposed. Beloved friends, election sets forth free grace. Cheap grace would not be grace at all, and if there were anything in the sinner that could prepare himself for God, the glory would partly belong to the sinner, but God is jealous, and He will not share His glory with another. It is in accordance with HIS ETERNAL PURPOSE that there are any souls which are saved, and His purpose will stand, and He will do all His pleasure. Every blessing is wrapped up in Christ, and so we find in the earlier chapters of Genesis MANY references to the Lord Jesus. He is pictured by the Tree of Life; pictured by the river of which the streams reached out in four directions, telling of world-wide blessing; pictured, partly in contrast, by Adam, from whom Eve was built up. Adam's deep sleep prefigures Christ's death whereby there is presented to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any

such thing. He is prophesied, moreover, in the Seed which is to bruise the serpent's head, and typified again in the coats of skin, and in the firstlings of the flock of Abel. Yes, He is preached to Cain, for God, in condescending mercy, declares a Gospel message to Cain, even as we proclaim the Gospel to every creature now. Hearken to these words, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted, and if thou doest not well, a sin-offering lieth to the opening". If thou doest not well thou needest a sin-offering for an opening into God's presence, otherwise the flaming sword hinders. So Christ came, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a Sin-Offering, that there might be a newly slain and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, that believers might have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and know what it is to be made near in this precious blood. Christ is thus set forth by symbol, and type, and prophecy, again and again in the earlier Scriptures; nor can we speak of the purpose of the ages without emphasizing HIM. Oh, beloved friends, beware of any system which CALLS ITSELF "a plan of the ages", which takes from the glory of Christ. Remember that God has marked Him out very definitely as God, and that there is no mere human parallel with His Deity. With Thomas we would set forth our confidence, and would say, "My Lord and My God". True, He was Man because He BECAME Man, but Hebrews 1, which shows Christ as the Higher than the angels, and says "Let all the angels worship Him", reveals Him as the One to Whom the Father says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". Hebrews

1 precedes Heb. 2. Very GOD and Very MAN.

We pass on to notice that all the suggestions of Christ and of His fulness, out from whose fulness His people have received, all these suggestions will bring us several thoughts as to now that plan will be carried out in the future. The question rises up - If there is a purpose of the ages, and if there be a wondrous kingdom, and if the Last Adam is to be exalted upon this earth, who will His bride be? What nation or nations will be subject to Him? and what will be His capital city in that wondrous kingdom? Scripture is not silent respecting these. May I leave for a moment the subject of the bride? It is hinted by cases like that of Rebecca, and Joseph's bride, and the bride of Moses, and in the Song of Songs, but more fully unveiled in the later Scriptures. As to the nation, however, there is very clear instruction. "I took your father Abraham". "I called him alone and blessed him, and increased him". "Thou art the Lord the God Who didst choose Abraham", and concerning the nation of Israel God says, "Ye are My witnesses", and again "This people have I formed for Myself, THEY SHALL SHOW FORTH MY PRAISE". Indeed it is again and again marked out, with a narrowing definiteness of prophecy, that Messiah would be of the seed of David according to the flesh. Before this, the prophecy of Gen. 3 is narrowed to Shem, - "He shall dwell in the tents of Shem". Then we have the limitation to Abraham, - "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed". Next, to Judah, for Shiloh would come thence (Gen.49.10). After this we have before us a narrowing to the line of David, and we see the promise to David that of his seed there would be

raised up Christ to sit on his throne. Let us emphasize this thought "God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David". How can such words be explained away as only belonging to a spiritual and mystical kingdom? The Lord Jesus will also have a literal position with a literal earthly dominion; and so we have Israel marked out as a nation which God will specially bless in the kingdom. There was an "if" under Sinai, "If ye obey My voice ... ye shall be a peculiar treasure". The people failed, and the people were dealt with by God in accord with failure, though in mercy He soon emphasized a Sacrifice. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me", and He quickly said, "Let them make Me a Sanctuary", and in that Sanctuary there was the mercy seat. But there shall be a future day, when, because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus, He will be exalted among Israel, as Joseph was honoured among his brethren. **THEY** despised at first, but they were brought to bow down to him! And what about the capital city of Christ's kingdom? I want you to notice that God has a purpose running through the whole of Scripture. He does NOT vary, He does NOT change to suit men. In the very first book of Scripture we have the first emphasized and approved king - Melchisedec, - and He is king of Salem. First king of righteousness, and then king of peace, for the work of righteousness shall be peace. A type of the Lord Jesus, in that we READ nothing of his ancestry. He is thus marked out as distinct from Aaron of whose death, as priest, moreover, we are told, and of whose successors. But Melchisedec pictures Him who abideth a Priest CONTINUALLY. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

Thou art a priest for ever", - a priest king. "after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110. 4). And thus the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in connection with Salem. Abraham, be it noticed, is found at Hebron and Salem alike, and David reigns as king in both cities. In the Book of Deuteronomy particularly, we have a stress, about 23 times I believe, on the PLACE which God would choose to put His Name there, and when we reach 1 Chron. 21, David particularly desires to buy the place of Ornan's threshing-floor, and in the beginning of the 22nd chapter he says, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the Altar of the burnt offering for Israel". God has fulfilled His plan, and marked out Jerusalem. He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." As another Psalm words it, "The Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it". And His rest for ever is not forgotten. A land which the Lord God cared for may have upon it thorns and nettles. Jerusalem may be trodden down of the Gentiles, but it is only UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. AGAIN the thought of the working out of ages, and the Divine purpose. The Holy Spirit ever emphasizes this! There is an "until", - and "Hitherto shalt thou come but no further" - of these times of the Gentiles, and then Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down, for the whole land shall be turned as a plain, and it (Jerusalem) shall be lifted up.

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising". "For it will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

"Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give Him no silence, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth". Beloved friends, God has, and holds to, His purpose. There IS to be His city. A Nimrod may erect a Babylon, as Gen. 10 sets forth, his very name signifying "We will rebel". And a Nebuchadnezzar, the first king of the times of the Gentiles, may say, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" BUT the words must yet sound forth concerning a literal Babylon rebuilt, "In one hour is thy judgment come".

"Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city". Men will solve an eastern question by their erecting of a Babylon, and THAT will be the world's centre, and the world will have commercial prosperity, as Zech. 5 shows. But they will only make a greater problem, which the Lord will solve in judgment, and the gain of the whole earth shall yet be consecrated to the Lord. The glory of man will be laid low, for this is the purpose and counsel of the Lord, even to stain the pride of all glory, when there shall be multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.

God's plan may seem to tarry, but it will surely come, it will not tarry. It was in the fulness of time that Christ came, and

there will be the dispensation of the fulness of times. GOD has His plan. It may be hidden, but it cannot be frustrated. We know in part, and to the natural man there may seem the tangle of the other side of the beautiful carpet. But there are the threads of the Divine purpose which He beholds and He will put all things straight. "Now will I arise, now will I be exalted" is His own testimony. "Be still" says the Psalmist, thus will you know that He is God. He will be exalted among the heathen, He will be exalted in the earth.

And God has His purpose, not only that the Lord Jesus should be honoured, but that His people should be blessed with Him. Sin has entered into the world and therefore the dominion of Gen. 1 can only be held by the Sinless One, - unless sinful ones are saved FROM their sins - and united with Him. God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world that we might LIVE through Him, but this necessitates a vital relationship to Himself. Therefore He, having taken upon Him the form of a servant, takes the place of guilty sinners, that they might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5. 21). This is the One place of blessing - IN CHRIST. If He died for me, my only hope is to live on resurrection ground IN HIM. This, in other generations, was not made known as it is now unveiled. The thought now before us explains how that God kept back part of the method of His grace. The old time saints were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which we see, and saw them not. Christ opened His mouth in parables, and uttered things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world;

and the apostle said, "I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you to fulfil the Word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory." The typical arrangements were plainly and intentionally without a FOUNDATION. The high priest who offered, himself needed an offering. Nor could he sacrifice before he had sacrificed; and furthermore, he died, and ended his priestly work in failure. Yes, every Day of atonement the same sins came up, for in those sacrifices there was a remembrance AGAIN of sins every year. It was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins, but God has now set forth (here is the very word "purpose") a propitiation through faith in HIS blood, the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. To declare His righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, - rather see the margin, - BECAUSE of the passing over of sins that are past. God now declares His righteousness. In the olden times He PASSED OVER the sins. The word implies that He put them on one side, but now He sends them quite away. He put them on one side in the types, He sends them away in the Antitype, - casts all our sins behind His back, for the Lord Jesus has made an end of sin legally, - for all who are brought to believe in Him. The righteousness is now unveiled BECAUSE of this passing over, which seemed to overlook the righteous demands of God's law. Christ has now wrought a righteous work, and therefore ^{since} He has made an end of sin legally

He gives to His people that which He has, and, I venture to say it with reverence and with Scripture open, that He will not give less to His people than His wondrous MERITS involved in His work for them. They do not share His Deity, but they do share the fulness of the fruit of His work, the result of His work, and thus they are made the Righteousness of God in Him. Is He accepted? They are equally accepted. Is He glorified? Is it not written "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of His Son, .. Whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified"? You who believe hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, and hath made you to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace - By GRACE have ye been saved, - and in that future day, body, soul and spirit will be kept in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This mortal SHALL put on immortality. At the present time it veils the dignity of those who are made sons of God. They go up and down this earth, and they have bodies which are bodies of death, and, since they own this, of humiliation. But we look for a Saviour Who shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned anew like unto His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is of power to have subdued all things unto Himself. Here is the prospect set before God's dear people, even the prospect of the Coming of their Lord when He will be the Firstborn among many brethren. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren. In

His resurrection was this emphasized, "I ascend unto My Father and YOUR Father", for the Corn of Wheat abode alone in His life, but when He died He brought forth MUCH fruit; and on resurrection ground His people are united with Him, and associated with Him, and it is this which the apostle emphasizes again and again and again as part of the Divine plan, the Divine purpose. Not only that Israel shall have earthly blessings, but that saved Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel, and so, writes the apostle, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints in this grace given, that I should preach AMONG THE GENTILES the unsearchable riches of Christ". This is marked out in 1 Tim. 2 as a background for prayer. The apostle having referred to the way in which he as a persecutor was saved, adds, "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks, be made for all men". I exhort THEREFORE, since God in me showed all longsuffering. I was a persecutor. Pray for unlikely ones. Lift up holy hands without wrath against persecutors, and without doubting. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear. "This is good and acceptable" the passage adds, "in the sight of God our Saviour Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth, for there is One God and One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in its appointed times, whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle. I speak the truth in Christ and lie not, a teacher of the GENTILES in faith and verity. I will

therefore that men pray everywhere". You mark the force of the passage. Notice the words "A teacher of the Gentiles"; "For all classes of men" is the prayer. God wills that all manner of men should be saved. "All" sometimes means without exception, sometimes without distinction. Here it plainly signifies in the context "without distinction". God's testimony is not simply to Jews as Jews, but now, in its appointed times, it is to sinners as sinners out from all nations, and so in that future glorious day the words will sound forth, as they are already anticipated in Rev. 5, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed ... OUT OF every kindred and tongue and people and nation". "OUT OF every kindred". There is no universalism, but there is a Divine gathering OUT OF every nation, and all such are gathered IN Christ. They are united together in Him. In the old dispensation there were Divine workings, but the Lord Jesus prophesied "On This Rock I will build My church". The old-time saints are Divinely marked out as brought to share these blessings, as it is written, "That they without us should not be made perfect". Believers of all dispensations will be brought together into a unity, for there is no salvation outside Christ, but in the present dispensation God granted the unveiling of this, and, by the earnest of the Spirit, the enjoyment in measure of it, though there will be the fuller enjoyment of it in that Day, when, as we have joyfully seen, He will present to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or ANY such thing. Thus we have brought before us the character of the present dispensation. God's dear people are NOT of the world even as Christ was not of the world. They are

brought out from this present EVIL age. The Lord's testimony has been given, "My kingdom is NOT out from this world". They are a separated people, they are those who being made to SIT together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus are not to be conformed to this age, but as STRANGERS and PILGRIMS are to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul, having their conversation honest among the Gentiles. They are to be in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation shining as LIGHTS in the world. They are told to fear not those that kill the body. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. They wait; they may be made, as Paul was, the off-securing of all things. Men may cast out their name as evil. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, is the exhortation, for great is your reward in heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they SHALL inherit the earth, and here is the calling of God's people, - not to "leaven" the world, as men would say, not to reform earth, not to establish a social movement, not to educate the masses; but to enjoy and declare the glorious Gospel of the Grace of God, whereby God is laying hold of poor guilty sinners, and bringing them out of death into life, and from the power of Satan unto God; that there may be a people ready to meet their Lord in the air, a people who will be around Him, zealous of good works, in that bright Day so soon to dawn. Beloved friends, THIS is God's purpose. The Lord Jesus is determined to present to Himself a glorious church, and that church must be formed, and God is gathering people out. They are a firstfruits; and when the time shall come and the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a

shout and with the voice of the archangel, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and His people who are living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, there will be a change of dispensation. NOW it is the acceptable year of the Lord, THEN will be the day of vengeance of our God. In quick succession will the vials of judgment be poured out, and then He Whose right it is to reign will manifestly take the kingdoms of this world, and sovereignty of this earth, and have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth, and all nations shall serve Him. He will prove Himself to be the Prince of Peace, as Isa. 9 declares. None will be able to stand before Him. There will be the thousand years, the Sabbath keeping that remaineth, when the sixth thousand years are run out.

A word or two as to Chronology, in this connection. It is very remarkable that the received chronology of the Persian Empire is confused. It occurs in the period which Scripture does not fully record as history, and no human contemporary historian supplies the gap. Men have constructed it afterwards, but they have made mistakes. There is little doubt in my mind that if you read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah together, you will see that the dates put in our margins are wrong, (being put there by men), and that Nehemiah reads straight on from the book of Ezra, and that Ezra was very shortly after the time of Joshua and Zerubbabel, that the break of many years has no warrant in Scripture, and no warrant in history; that Ezra 6 alludes to Darius Hystaspes under the name of "Darius, even Artaxerxes", who is evidently the same as Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. If this be so, the problem

that seems at first that the six thousand years have passed, is removed, and the theories of men which imagine that 2520 years were from 606 B.C. to 1914 are laid low. The Persian Empire dates have been Divinely veiled, that men may not know the exact time; may not construct their chronological ideas. We can see that the 6000 years have NEARLY run out, but I mention this particularly for MAN'S plan of the ages makes much of chronology, but does not realise this error as to Persian dating.

To return. When the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign as King, when He shall be the Exalted One, God will make manifest that His purpose is worked out, is being worked out completely. Jerusalem, as I have said, shall be a praise in the earth, and the Lord's people will reign with Him. It is toward this \neq toward Him - that we look. This bright and blessed Hope cheers and encourages God's people. Christ WILL come, not secretly, but in manifested glory, as Matt. 24 declares. 2 Thess. 2 particularly warns against any thought of a secret coming, and Rev. 1 brings out the same testimony. When He shall come manifestly, His people will be manifested with Him in glory. They could not share His sufferings with respect to atonement. He made one sacrifice. True, they are linked with His afflictions AT THE HAND OF MEN. They share THOSE afflictions. But under the hand of God He alone could say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME"? But saints will share His glory. They will share His exaltation. ^{THEN} And [^]all Israel shall be saved. This does not mean a universalism of every individual, for we are distinctly told, that the little

one shall become a thousand, and God will pardon those whom He reserves. He will bring the third part through the fire. Mark again the words, the little one shall become a thousand. God will multiply quickly. A nation will seem to be born at once, as Isa. 66 sets forth, and we read of the generations of the age of the ages (Eph. 3. 21), namely of that future age with its wonderful generations when the Lord shall be exalted amid myriads, and that will be the ingathering! The firstfruits now, the ingathering then. Not universalism. There are many who quote the expression "The restitution of all things", but forget the added statement "Which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets", and the prophets always give a limitation. When they refer to glory they also refer to judgment. Again and again are we reminded that God will deal in wrath with many. It is beautiful, however, to see that there will be a widespread blessing to all the tribes of Israel, as Ezekiel shows, and all nations of the earth will contribute their quota. Men of all the nations will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, and will say, "We will go with you for we have heard that God is with you". That will be beyond the firstfruits of the present time, and thus not only by reason of those who have died in infancy and are saved by the blood of Christ, but manifestly in that period as well, Christ will have a marvellous preeminence in His exaltation. There will be a resurrection of His people at the beginning of the thousand years, the resurrection of others at the end. In the same day, but at the end; and Scripture calls the latter a

resurrection of JUDGMENT, and contrasts it with the resurrection of LIFE, and links it with that which is the opposite of blessedness and holiness. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the FIRST resurrection". Oh, I would beseech you to avoid the theories of men which suggest a resurrection for a "probation". The word "judgment" is not used as an encouragement, but in CONTRAST WITH LIFE. God will then judge every man according to his works, and we read "Those who have sinned without law shall perish without law" - not that they will have an "opportunity" of repentance after death. There will be Divine wrath. God knows exactly the condition of all, and He will deal righteously. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha than for the cities where Christ did His mighty works. But that word "tolerable" does not mean as our present English idea, that which is somewhat pleasant, and fairly satisfactory. It means there will be a less heavy WEIGHT, even an Sodom than on favoured Galilee, but in both cases a real weight of judgment. The whole context shows the awful aspect of the Lord's message, namely, that there will be such a tremendous weight of judgment on those at Capernaum that it will be more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrha & those homes of ancient iniquity. The restoration of Sodom and Gomorrha is a restoration of cities and of places, but there is no statement of the resurrection of the persons to have a new chance or to share *in* glory. This is a human misconception, as Jude sets forth so definitely. And "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment", and the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. There is no further

opportunity. In this sense, Behold, NOW is the acceptable time, behold, NOW is the day of salvation. And, beloved friends, if you are in Christ Jesus, emphasize this glorious Gospel, for there is none other Name under heaven, given among men, but that of the Lord Jesus, whereby we must be saved. God has linked all His purposes with Him, and if you know not Christ, Oh I would earnestly bring before you in God's grace, and in the Name of the Lord Jesus, the one way of escape from this present evil age. The message of invitation is still clear, and impressed by the personal Holy Spirit, to those who labour and are heavy laden, to those who are athirst. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and if we take the lowly place of those who are heart-broken because of our sins, we shall know the mercy of God, for He healeth the broken in HEART. Yes, it is the work of the Personal Spirit of God to quicken, that there may be that which is born of the Spirit and is spirit, that so we may be able to perceive the things which are freely given to us of God, and to walk in the Spirit now, in loyal and loving obedience to our rejected Lord, and to be to the praise of His glory, both now and in the ages to come. Wondrous, indeed, is the fruit of grace, for our gracious God has a purpose, and concerning the finished work of the Lord Jesus it is written that "He shall be SATISFIED".

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