

Every Family in Heaven and on Earth

Eph. 3: 15

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The blessing of man, and with him of all creation, is to be determined simply by his position before God. Therefore to be without God is to be without hope in the world; and thus every renewed soul proves, in the daily, hourly history of his own little kingdom within, that his blessing is in the favour of the Lord, and that clouds and sorrows arise when that favour is withdrawn or forgotten. As man at first stood on the face of this earth of ours, his blessing was all of this character. He was blest because his whole condition reflected the kindness and love of his Creator. His very constitution was as the image of God, the manifestation of divine perfections and dominion (Gen. 1: 27); in the sabbath a standing witness of fellowship between him and his Creator was ordained (Gen. 2: 3); over him he had a most gracious Lord, who enjoined on him only a necessary burden (Gen. 2: 16); around him he saw a fair creation spread as his own domain, made willingly subject to him in its ten thousand sources of tribute and service, by their great Creator; for, in token of man's lordship of them all, the Lord brought them to him to be named, and whatsoever name Adam gave them the same. was the name thereof (Gen. 2: 19, see Isa. 40: 26). By his side, to complete the blessedness, he had given him of the Lord a companion fully meet for him, a part of himself, — bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2: 22); and thus was his condition perfect and blessed in every relation, showing forth the kindness of God; and he had access to the tree of life to keep it so. But all this state of things was forfeited by transgression; — all blessing was gone when the divine favour was withdrawn, when enmity fell out between the righteous God and His offending creature; so did it between the creatures as among themselves. There was no longer the due subjection of the earth to Adam, when Adam had failed in his subjection to God; the earth yielded thorns and thistles to him, as soon as he had brought forth the fruit of a heart revolted from God. And the joys of innocency between the man and the woman were all likewise fled: their nakedness was now their shame, and confidence was changed for covering.

The whole economy of creature-blessedness in paradise, thus presented for a moment, and thus disturbed, was however a mystery; the tabernacle there was, it is true, quickly taken down, but not until we had seen in it the shadows of better things to come.

The purpose of God is not affected by this failure in man. The order of creation, as set in subjection to Adam for the glory of the Lord God, and the union of man with woman taken out of him, and thus made the partner of his name and dignity, is "a great mystery." We have divinely traced for us in all this, the union of Christ and the church, and the creation put in subjection under Him (see Ps. 8, Eph. 5: 23); and we look now for the opening of a happier paradise, for the erection of a second temple, that is never to be taken down, but to continue the blessed witness of the sustaining faithful strength of the Second Man, Who is the Lord from heaven; Who having bruised her enemy under her foot, will go in and out there with His espoused church, made "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh," who shall then know the support and comfort of His right hand for ever.

The opening heavens do thus, as it were, shine around us in the opening of the book of God; the fellowship of heaven and earth that is there presented, the fellowship of man and the woman, the fellowship of man with the creation around him, shall all be displayed again, and that too in still more blessedness and glory; because of the dignity of the person, and the unspeakable riches and excellency of the work, of Him, in and by Whom all this is to be established. Christ Jesus our Lord is the single-

handed power of God to do all this. He alone is the slayer and abolisher of every enmity; the reconciler and fixed centre of all this order and fellowship for ever; as it is written, "Hereafter shall ye see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1: 51); and again "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He (God) might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him" (Eph. 1: 10).

Our Lord Christ who is at once "God over all, blessed for ever," and "Son of man," "made of a woman," Who, in the work given Him to do according to the everlasting covenant, descended first into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascended up far above all heavens, has title to "fill all things" (Eph. 4: 10): and in Him when He has asserted this His title, "every family in heaven and on earth" is to be gathered. May the Spirit who witnesses to Him, and shows the saints things to come, so trace before us those varied features of His glory, that desiring Him we may ever in Spirit be saying, "Come Lord Jesus!" And let us not be ashamed to own, "that hope long deferred maketh the heart sick," seeing that we should know no full satisfying joy till we see Him (John 16: 22). The Lord Jesus Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and by Whom, through faith in His name, the poor sinner has even now full remission of sins, and access to God as his heavenly Father in full assurance of His love, is known in scripture to sustain the glorious characters, among many other, of King of Israel and Head of the church.

The Jewish nation had constant expectation of Messiah, in the first of these. To the hope connected with Him as King of Israel, the twelve tribes, as the apostle says, instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come. It was therefore simply by such a character that the Jews tried the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus when He spoke to them of being lifted up, signifying thereby what death He should die, they said to Him, (John 12: 34) "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" They had known their Messiah under this title of Son of man, but then it was in connection with a dominion, and glory and kingdom, that should never pass away; for thus had their prophet spoken (Dan. 7: 13, 14). But who was this Son of man who was thus "to be lifted up?" And His own apostles, whom He had called and chosen for Himself out of Israel, were thus Jewish in their expectation respecting Him; as appears, I might say, from the whole tenor of their intercourse with the Lord, and particularly from the request of Zebedee's children, and from the apostles, saying, even after He had risen from the dead, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1: 6.) Besides, there was equal ignorance in the Jews and the apostles, touching the mystery of "the little while" (John 7: 33, John 16: 16). The difference between them did not rest in any different expectation respecting the Messiah, but rather in their faith or unbelief concerning the truth, that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

And this knowledge of Christ, according to the measure of Jewish hopes even by His own chosen ones, was only "after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5: 16); for it linked their expectations with this earth merely. It did not take them out of the system of human affections and associations, or guide them into the apprehension of any heavenly inheritance in and with Him. For this rests in the revelation of Him as Head of the church, and this character of Messiah is to be known only by the ministry of the Holy Ghost among the saints.

The second character of the Christ, Head of the church, with its resulting power in the church or body mystical, I judge to have been the mystery laid up in the purpose of God, but hid from ages and generations, i.e., not disclosed in former times or by previous dispensations (Rom. 16: 25, Eph. 3: 5). And there is involved in its very nature, if I may so speak, a necessity for its being thus hidden: for the blessed Lord entered into the character of Head of the church on His entrance into His heavenly glory, and this resulted from Israel's rejection of Him; so that the revelation of the Christ as Head of His body

the church has to await the manifestation of Israel's apostacy, and thus could not, by dispensations, have been disclosed till the apostacy was so evidenced. That the Lord's entrance into His present glory in heaven resulted from Israel's apostacy, among other passages, is intimated by His own words in the presence of the great organs of Jewish unbelief, in the day of the power of darkness. When challenged of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to say whether He were "The Christ the Son of God," after speaking in terms full of righteous condemnation of them, He convicts as it were the place of judgment, that behold iniquity was there, saying, "If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, or let me go." He adds, "From henceforth (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν) shall ye see the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God;" that is, that now was the time of exalting Him to His heavenly glory, since Israel had rejected Him, giving Him no place of glory on earth (Luke 22: 68, 69).

The Father has thus made man's wrath to praise Him. The Christ has lost His earthly glory for a season, being the Heir of the vineyard and yet cast out by the vineyard's wicked husbandmen; but the Father has raised the rejected Stone to the highest, and thus prepared larger joys and new honours to await Him in the coming day of the revelation of His glory.

During this present age (while waiting for Him Who has turned away His face in righteous anger from the house of Israel, until He repent and leave a blessing behind Him, Isa. 8: 17) the Christ, as "Head over all things to His church, is gathering His saints by His word and Spirit. The saints, "whose conversation is in heaven," who "sit in heavenly places," by the ministry of the Spirit, shall be brought to their perfect measure, and thus being constituted "the family in heaven," who are knit together in "the knowledge of the Son of God," will have their place with the Son in the Father's house; and in His, the Son's, kingdom (Eph. 4: 13, Isa. 14: 1, Rev. 3: 21).

This family, ordained for heaven, is already through the Spirit brought into circumstances altogether ultra-Jewish, if I may so speak. They are in the adoption, and not merely in the place of servitude (Gal. 4: 1-4), they are even now "blest with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," not merely with blessings of the earth. They are in the expectancy of the inheritance of all things with Christ; and not merely becoming the subjects of a kingdom under Him (Rom. 8: 17). They are in present conflict not with flesh and blood, or with the nations of the earth, but with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, and are taught to hope for final victory over them, and of completely dispossessing them of their present place and power (Eph. 2: 2 with 1 Thess. 4: 17; see also Rev. 12: 10).

When the church is thus complete and Gentile fulness brought in, "all Israel" is to be saved (Rom. 11: 26). This present dispensation will have its purpose answered in the taking of the saints into their place of union in heaven with the Lord their Head, which is the first resurrection. Then the same blessed Lord, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in power, and on Whose head are to be "many crowns," will turn His hand to gather His family on earth, (for the blessings of the earth are Israel's, and all the nations in and through them) in the character of the King of Israel, or, "God of the whole earth" (Isa. 54: 5). His glory shall then arise on Zion, and the Gentiles shall come to the light thereof. He shall be set on the earth as God's salvation, to be the glory of His people Israel, and to embrace all the nations within the light of His presence (Luke 2: 32). Then shall come the glorious dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things, whether in heaven or on earth, will be gathered together in one, even in Christ (Eph. 1: 10). Then shall the fellowship of heaven and earth be restored, and Christ, as the true Jacob's ladder, be the Ruler and Sustainer of it all. Truth shall then spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven. The heavens and the earth, the morning stars and the children of Israel, the angels in the heights, and kings with all people of the earth, shall together praise the name of the Lord (Ps. 148). "His will shall be done in all places of His dominion, and the days of heaven shall be upon the earth" (Deut. 11: 21).

The verse which I have selected, as summarily presenting that truth which I am desiring to trace in this paper (Eph. 3: 15), has no doubt been commonly read as describing the saints who have departed this life, and are now, as is judged, in heaven; and those who are still in their bodies on the earth. I would be understood fully to grant that there are numbers of God's dear family now disembodied, in heaven, and members of the same family still on earth, and that these are, of course, included in "every family"; but then they cannot assuredly constitute of themselves that family in its wholeness. The family presented in its wholeness must wait for the day when all whom God regards as His are gathered together; and to which this passage in its natural bearing has respect. The purpose of the Holy Ghost in this verse (which may be treated as an adjective parenthesis) is, to tell us that "every family" acknowledges one God and Father, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; thus leaving it for other scriptures to instruct us of whom it is that "every family" is to consist. It is this which, as desiring and praying to be fully subject to those scriptures, I am now aiming to do. May the Lord give us the Spirit of humble worshippers in all our labours.

Every family then, though part is in heaven and part on earth, shall be one, as owning one Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The heavenly branch of it is to be with the Firstborn in the Father's house, His God their God, His Father their Father, His dwelling their dwelling, His inheritance theirs also, the fulness of the Father's love theirs as His (John 17: 26; John 20: 17). "Ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And the branch of it which is to be found on the earth will be gathered by and into a Father's love also; for the true Solomon, Christ as David's son, the Head of Jewish glory, shall enjoy that ancient promise of His God, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son;" and this joy resting in fulness on His head shall circulate among the thousands of His Israel; this oil of gladness shall descend from the beard to the skirts of the Aaron clothing; for Jehovah of old spake of Israel as His son, as His firstborn (Ex. 4: 22). So, in this dispensation, believers are made now the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 21), And the prophet, anticipating the day of Judah's salvation, says of Jerusalem, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. 33: 16).

This leads me, then, to consider what is to be the principle upon which "every family in heaven and on earth" is to be formed. I desire, then, to consider the order, or successive acts of Christ by which these branches of the family of God are to be thus formed; and then also the connection and intercourse that may be maintained among them. Sweet meditations for faith and hope! though knowing but in part, we can but speak or think of these things in part.

As to the principle, by which every family of God is to be formed, it is mere grace — grace setting the saints in heaven, and establishing Israel with the worshipping obedient nations on the earth; grace coming forth from the love of God, to bring us home into the love of the Father. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," is the apostle's summary of the Lord's dealings with the Gentiles and with Israel, after He had been tracing Israel's rejection for a time, in order to let in "the fulness of the Gentiles," and in the end to save all Israel; thus showing that mercy should alike rejoice through the gathered and blest families in heaven and on earth. And in the satisfying sense of this, he breaks forth into that note, not of ignorant, but of intelligent admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11: 33). Here may our souls rest for ever; here may we dwell, having our delight therein, the mercy of our God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That grace is the principle of our present salvation, and our future inheritance, of that which is now reserved in heaven for us, is the sweet burthen, I would say, of all the New Testament scriptures, and to which every thought and feeling of the renewed soul must fully consent. I would not, therefore,

speaking particularly upon it. But that Israel is to come hereafter into the blessing of the earth, simply by grace, may be more carefully traced. Though gradually presented in many parts of scripture, yet it is specifically so in that beautiful scene recorded in Exodus 32 - 34, which has been already slightly referred to in one of the papers of this publication. I would here shortly refer to another passage (Deut. 29, 30), as exhibiting the same doctrine.

Moses had just pointed to the people the blessing and the curse that was necessarily appended to their obedience or disobedience (Deut. 28); when he calls them again to listen further to words of covenant between them and the Lord (Deut. 29: 1). He then recites generally the mercies they had enjoyed at the hand of God from their days in Egypt, telling them however that the Lord had not as yet circumcised their hearts (2-9). He then solemnly places them before the Lord as His people, warning them as he had done before, that disobedience would but cause them to be scattered through the earth, their land to be left a wilderness, and then themselves to become, as it were, a proverb and wonder to the nations of the world (10-29). He proceeds then to further unfold the Lord's covenant with them, showing them that when they had thus fully entered into the curse of disobedience, if they or the children (for that covenant equally embraced all generations) of them (Deut. 29: 15, Deut. 30: 2) should repent, then the Lord would have compassion on them and gather them, and circumcise their heart so that they should live for ever, and be blest in every work of their hand, in the fruit of their body, of their cattle, and of their land Deut. 30: 1-10). He then darkly hints to them on what this repentance was to be founded, i.e., faith; for he uses the very same words which the apostle quotes as expressive of the dispensation of faith or grace in opposition to that of law and works (11-14, Rom. 10: 6).

This dispensation then, of faith or grace, is that which is hereafter to establish Israel in the blessing of the earth for ever, when they repent, or in faith turn to Jesus their Messiah, looking to Him Whom they pierced (Zech. 12: 10), and welcoming Him as their King and Deliverer (Matt. 23: 39), saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." So also in Moses' Song, which follows very closely upon this (Deut. 32), we have the same covenant presented. For there, after the prophet had been forewarning his nation of the curse that was to come upon them for their unfaithfulness to Jehovah, he points to the land of the people in the distant future as receiving mercy, and speaks of this as that which was among other things sealed up among God's treasures (Deut. 32: 34-43), as he had before called the grace or mercy of God to Israel God's "secret" (Deut. 29: 29); and it is these sealed treasures of grace, this secret of mercy, that the Spirit largely discloses, and makes known in our dispensation, showing as He graciously does, "plainly of the Father."

That grace is thus the fountain of all blessing to Israel, and shall hereafter establish them in the land of their fathers, is presented to us also very strikingly in an event in the life of the patriarch Jacob. When he was returning with his households and flocks out of the land of his exile, his brother's heart was moved against him, and he came forth to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob commits his case into the hands of God, and from Him, in the action of wrestling with the Angel until he had prevailed, he receives a pledge that the mercy he desired should be his. And so it was; the anger that stirred in his brother's heart was quieted, and Jacob passed safely and honourably into the land of his covenant (Gen. 32: 24).

Now Jacob in all this stands before us as the type of Israel in the last times, when they shall come forth from their present exile to claim their promised inheritance; and their God and Deliverer shall show Himself in the hour of their need, to still the enemy and avenger, and give them the land of their fathers.

Jacob, Israel's representative, was taught by the Angel's touch disjuncting the hollow of his thigh,

to know that the blessing then pledged to him was all of grace: for that the Angel had not put forth all his strength, but had even allowed himself to be prevailed over; and just as our apostle who was given in like manner and with like purpose, a thorn in the flesh, that he might learn that he was weak in himself, but through grace had all his sufficiency in Jesus (2 Cor. 12: 9).

Israel then, as Jacob was, shall be taken through grace into their earthly inheritance, and the church shall, through the same grace be taken into the heavenly glory; and thus mercy alone shall establish every family in heaven and on earth.

I would now beloved (through the mercy of our God, who would have His saints to meditate in His ways, and humbly and yet freely inquire in His temple), seek to trace from scripture what will be the order or procedure of our God when He comes to form His households and to set His every family in heaven and on earth. And what shall we ask Him by the Spirit to give us in this and in all our inquiries? The temper of children who consciously know nothing but through His word and teaching; the mind of friends who delight to use the privilege of friendship by learning his secrets, and claiming confidence: the unshod feet of worshippers ever heedful that the ground is holy. For though whatever things are written, are for our learning; yet are they the things of the blessed God, and we are but the creatures of His hand. And oh, for faith to trace these things, and meditate upon them, as though we stood in the presence of them; so that we may enter more and more into the substance of the things hoped for, and be less sensible of the things that are present, whether joyous or sorrowing; having blessed deliverance from their power, through the faith of the things that lie beyond them all.

The blessed Lord Jesus is now ascended up far above all heavens and is seated on the Father's throne, the place of incommunicable glory and majesty. He has gone up on high as a mighty conqueror, and has all power given Him in heaven and on earth. He has gone up on high as a mighty High Priest, to the service of the heavenly temple for us, waiting in sympathy on our infirmities, and being our Advocate with the Father. In these His ascension glories, He is exercising Himself for the completing the full measure and stature of His body the church, until it come to the "perfect man" in Christ. His long delayed return is "salvation, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And thus His ascension state is not to be the last stage in His wondrous history. The heavens only retain Him until the times of the decreed restitution of all things be come. He then is to come again in like manner as He once went into heaven; as the high priest who once a year went into the holiest, came forth again to meet the people.

Now the order and progress of the Saviour's journey of old, back to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and also of His return and entrance into that glory which is still reserved for Him, may be somewhat traced in scripture. And what paths are these to trace!

In passing from the grave to His glory, having broken the bands of death because it was not possible that He should be holden in it, He stayed for a while on this earth, which of old He had given to the children of men. Here He spake with those who were His for forty days, concerning the kingdom of God; giving pledges to them of His constant faithful love, and showing not only that He Who was dead was alive again, but that He was going to glory — the same gracious Master Whose love in the days of His sojourn with them, had been ever so present to comfort and keep them.

In passing upward from them to His seat higher than all heavens, we may trace Him spoiling principalities and powers, the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, leading captivity captive, making show of them openly, triumphing over them (it may be in the sight of the elect angels), as the serpent's mighty bruiser, Who had come down to the earth, the house of the strong man, and, as the stronger than he, had bound him and spoiled his goods. Then, having accomplished His way back to the

highest heavens, He was received of the Father and seated at His own right hand in token of the Father's infinite complacency in Him, and, for His sake, in the saints, for whom He had thus humbled Himself and fought and conquered. "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," was the welcome with which He was then received. Sweet consolation for Him Who had heard the cry from earth, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" The fulness of joy awaited Him there, though here He was crucified. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy," said the Lord anticipating His ascension to the Father.

The season of His return from this His seat on high awaits the Father's pleasure, Who has put this in His own power, for the Son has subjected Himself according to the counsels of grace for us; He receives a kingdom and then returns. The present prince of the air, the spiritual wickedness that is now in the heavenly places, ruling the darkness of this world, is to be displaced. Michael and his angels are to fight against the dragon and his angels. Jesus is to descend from "On high" into these lower heavens, and by Michael to prevail, till the great dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, is cast out into the earth, and his angels with him, and no place be found for them any more in heaven (Rev. 12: 7-9).

The dragon, thus cast out of heaven, comes down with great wrath to the inhabitants of the earth and sea, his persecution being directed especially against Israel, who will then be brought into expectation of their Messiah as heir of David's throne; and thus consequently be witness to Him as heir of the world against the dragon the usurper of it, and the kings of the earth his champions. The dragon's title to the earth is already disproved, as indeed the Lord's right to every thing from the grave of death to the throne of the Highest in heaven, has been blessedly manifested by His passing through all these, rising in the execution of His mighty work as the descended and ascended One; but He the rightful heir has not actually assumed His right; and thus the usurper has still power, and throne, and great authority to confer, which he will do until He comes Whose all power is.

And come He will with "ten thousands of His saints," to smite the kings of the earth, to show Himself as the mighty God, the Kinsman-Redeemer, Who shall deliver the inheritance of the family of God, and fix it in their possession for ever.

His action, as the Goel or Redeemer, as appears, will be conducted in the wrath of the Lamb, against the Antichrist* and his company, who have despised His grace as the Lamb of God presented to them for the taking away of sin; and in the wrath of the Son (Who as being Son should have been acknowledged to be Heir also) against the kings and judges of the earth who refused to do righteously as for Him, King of kings and Lord of lords, but held themselves as the ministers of iniquity and champions of the usurper (Rev. 6: 16; Ps. 11, 12). The citizens of this world sent after the departing Lord the cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" that cry has been echoed through their ranks ever since, and will be kept up until it is answered in righteous wrath. "These mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me," (Luke 19: 27). O my God, make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind; as the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with Thy storm; fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord; let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea let them be put to shame and perish; that men may know that Thou, Whose name alone is Jehovah, art Most High over all the earth" (Psalm 83: 13-18). How terrible that such language as this should be righteously taken up on the lips of those who are now beseeching the powers of the earth to be reconciled to this blessed Son! "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling; kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in

Him" (Ps. 2: 10-12). But if the counsel of the Lord be now set at nought, the coming calamity will be laughed at. Blessed, blessed Lord, write all Thy word with Thine own living Spirit on the fleshy tables of our hearts, that we may not in our weakness only speak of these things, but in His power have, our life in them, and according to them! It is then that the Lord will awake as out of sleep (Ps. 10: 12, Ps. 44: 23); then will He, to Whom vengeance belongeth, show Himself (Ps. 94: 1). He Whose right hand (the emblem of His power) is now folded in His bosom, will then pluck it thence to use it (Ps. 74: 10, 11); to use it as the true David for the clearing of the promised inheritance of all the enemies of God and His people; and then for the sitting down as the true Solomon, in the fulness and peace of His kingly honours; His sun rising on the earth as a morning without clouds (2 Sam. 23: 4); His light enlightening the Gentiles, and being the glory of His people Israel; the first dominion, the kingdom brought to the daughter of Jerusalem, but the people of the nations flowing into it — the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, being then called the God of the whole earth (Isa. 54: 1-5; Ps. 72: 8-11; Micah 4: 1-8).

[*There is confusion here, as indeed it is a very general oversight, between the Beast or imperial power of the West, and the second Beast, or false prophet and Antichrist who will then reign in Jerusalem, sustained by the Western head. ED.]

This shall be the gathering of "every family on earth," the full display of the kingdom, when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven, when the days of heaven shall be upon the earth (Deut. 11: 21); all bowing their knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and every tongue confessing that the once rejected Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2: 11).

This order of gathering, first every family in heaven, and then every family on earth, is, as I apprehend, represented in several scriptures, as in Rom. 11, already alluded to, "The fulness of the Gentiles," preceding the salvation of "all Israel." I will, however, in addition, only notice the twelfth chapter of St. John, which very fully and graciously gives us to look at this order of Christ's procedure in taking the heaven and the earth, and gathering His families there.

When the chapter opens, our blessed Lord's paschal sufferings were approaching very slowly. He was on His way to Jerusalem as the place out of which a prophet could not perish. He first reaches Bethany, which lay outside the city, and is there refreshed: and the scene represents us with a lively figure of the Lord in the bosom of His church, as we may draw from the following considerations: —

1. — This house in Bethany exhibited a sample of faith in Him as dead and alive again. The anointing His feet, by the loving, worshipping Mary, was in token of her faith in His burial and all its blessed wondrous fruit. It expressed her faith in Him as the Holy One of God, Whose body should not see corruption, but that He, the Jesus, Who was about to be crucified, should be anointed, and glorified, and consecrated to a royal priesthood; for this was signified by the ceremonial oil of the law, whose mystical virtues her pot of spikenard would fain rival and set forth. And such is the faith of the church now. She stands as believing in Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4: 24); Who wrought His mighty power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and dominion (Eph. 1: 20); in God Who has exalted Jesus, obedient unto death, and given Him a name, at which every knee in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, should bow (Phil. 2: 8-10).

2. So this house, as the church does, witnessed His resurrection-power in the person of Lazarus. "You hath He quickened," is the word to every member of the church, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken

your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." And Lazarus, the witness of Christ's resurrection-power is, in this house of blessing, seen seated with the Lord, in token of that full fellowship which the saints are to have with Him, when they sit at His table with Him in His kingdom (Matt. 26: 29).

3. This house in Bethany was the place into which the Lord retired when He was rejected by Israel (see Matt. 21: 17; Mark 11: 11-19); as the church is the place. of His presence, the witness of His grace and power, while Israel remains in unbelief and separation from Him. "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples, and I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (Isa. 8: 16, 17; see also Deut. 32: 20; Isa. 65: 1, 2).

Thus are we given to trace, in this happy household at Bethany, the sure resemblance of the church of God; which the Lord by His Spirit is now gathering, and which is, when brought to its fulness, to constitute the family of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

After giving a view of our Lord in the midst of this, beloved household, our next chapter presents Him entering into the royal city as Son of David. On this occasion He is attended with crowds of His willing people, triumphantly bidding Him welcome as the King of Israel. All this was illustrative of that day, when, after the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, or the church is perfected in all its members, this same Jesus shall come to Zion, "and all Israel shall be saved"; when He, for whom as Head His body is now preparing, shall as King of Israel gather His willing people around Him, and reign Himself over the earth the Heir of all its glory.

And when the Lord has thus taken His throne in Jerusalem, the destined centre of the whole earth, "the city of the great King," He will speedily receive the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession; for the Holy One of Israel shall be called the God of the whole earth (Isa. 54: 5). The one Jehovah shall be King over all the earth (Zech. 14: 9). To the Shiloh of Judah shall then be the gathering of the peoples (Gen. 49: 10); and the kingdom of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11: 15). And so, as this chapter proceeds, we have a sample of this gathering to Shiloh; for, after His royal entry into Jerusalem, we see our blessed Jesus receiving the willing homage of the Gentiles, who came to worship there, in pledge as it were of that day when every one shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14: 16; Isa. 66: 23); and, when many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts at, Jerusalem" (Zech. 8: 22).

Then shall every family on earth be collected under the same blessed One and Head as is every family in heaven, and the promised "greater things" shall then be seen, the union and yet distinctness of heaven and earth, "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1: 51).*

[*The application of this verse in the Gospel is either "henceforth" or unlimited if the note of time be omitted, as seems to be the best reading. ED.]

Thus does this chapter give us a view of the order in which the gatherings of the Lord's households are, as I believe scripture teaches us, to be conducted: the church brought to her fulness, and seated with the Lord at His table in His kingdom; Israel saved — their Kinsman-Redeemer, their Royal Deliverer in their midst, and on His throne in Zion; and then the uttermost parts of the earth taken into possession, and made the worshippers of Him Who is "the desire of all nations" (Haggai 2: 7). When these scenes had thus passed in review before Him, the blessed Jesus was wrapt into vision of the day of His glory. "The hour is come," says He, "that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12: 23). We shall not however here follow (though of deep and affecting interest to the soul that adheres to Him in love and desire) the course of His thoughts in the verses that follow. Only we will observe, that

He at once recognised the necessity of His previous sufferings; for thus had the prophets testified beforehand, "The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow" (1 Peter 1: 11).

I have been tracing the principle upon which every family of God is to be formed, and the order in which the several branches of it are to be gathered. I would now close with presenting a few hints from scripture of the connection and intercourse that is to be known between every family in heaven and every family on earth, all acknowledging, as they will, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we have many distinct intimations of the character of intercourse which may then be enjoyed between the glorified saints, "the children of the resurrection," and the subject people of the earth.

Our Lord Himself had fellowship of a very peculiar character with His disciples after He had risen from the dead. He did not dwell among them as one of themselves, as He had done before He suffered: their lodging and their repast were not His, as they had been; but He went in and out among them as it pleased Him or the Father (Acts 10: 40, ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἔμφανῆ γενέσθαι); and, though just the same Master as before, full of the graciousness of First-born among many brethren, yet was He, to their sense, and indeed, in another form, His body had passed through its change; it was flesh and bones (Luke 24: 39), instinct with spirit and not with blood (1 Cor. 15: 44); but consistent with His glory. He appeared at pleasure in different forms to His elect; as of old while predestinatively assuming His risen body, He had appeared to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, and others (see Luke 24: 15; John 20: 5-15). And I believe He did then show Himself after His resurrection, in order, among other purposes, to give us to know something of that manner of intercourse that shall pass between the glorified saints, and the restored and sanctified families of man upon the earth.

A passing glimpse we have of the same thing in the bodies of many of the saints arising, after the Lord had risen, and coming out of the graves, and going into the holy city and appearing to many (Matt. 27: 53). We have also, as I judge, a gracious sample of this fellowship given to us, at the time when Israel was first brought into covenant with Jehovah, while the blood of sprinkling was still warm and fresh upon them, and before they had done any despite to the mercy of their God, but had rather said, "All that the Lord hath said, will we do and be obedient." Moses with his train went up to the Lord, "and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven, in clearness." Moses alone came near, alone goes into the Mount, but the elders were eye-witnesses of the Majesty of the God of Israel, — they stand undismayed in the sight, though not, like Moses, in the midst, of the cloud of glory; — "they saw God, and did eat and drink" (Exodus 24); thus showing the distinction of being in the glory, and outside of it, and yet in some sort in fellowship together.

So, in the holy mount, we have a very sweet exhibition of the same intercourse, and Moses is seen in the same place of glory. The Lord is there with His raised and changed saints Moses and Elias in glory; and His disciples, still as inhabitants of the earth in their bodies of flesh and blood, are brought into nearest view of that glory. The holy Jerusalem having the glory of God, with the Lamb the light thereof, is there, as it were, shown to us; its pearly gates are opened before us, and the nations are seen as walking in the light of it (Rev. 21: 24). The disciples were not in the heavens; for as one of them says, the "voice which came from heaven we heard" (2 Peter 1: 18); but though they did not enter with Moses and Elias into the cloud of the excellent glory (see Luke 9: 34, Gr.), yet they saw it and have spoken of it (2 Peter 1: 17). They have testified to us that they have been "eye-witnesses of His Majesty"; as hereafter in the kingdom, the remnant that is saved shall go "to the isles afar off," saith Jehovah-Jesus, "that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66: 19). And this distinction of being in the glory, and of only standing in the presence of it, appears to be given to us by the apostle, as the several callings of the church and

of Israel (see 2 Cor. 3: 12-18). He there anticipates the day when Israel shall turn to the Lord, and the veil shall be taken away; when they shall be able to look on the glory without dismay — that glory into the image of which by the Spirit, the church, like Moses, was to be changed (Phil. 3: 21).

In the day when Israel, the unfaithful, is betrothed to the Lord for ever, and her land is married, the harmony of all the parts of the redeemed system of the heavens and the earth (having Jehovah in the highest, and beneath, the whole creation which now groans and travails in pain, brought into the liberty of the glory of God's sons), is exhibited by the prophet Hosea, "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely: and I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord; and it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea 2: 18-22).

So, Jacob's vision of the ladder, whose foot was set upon the earth, and the top of which reached into heaven, also gives us another image of the same fellowship. The heavens were seen, as it were, shining in their brightness, high above the earth on which the patriarch was resting, but all the while the angels of God were travelling up and down the ladder. So shall the saints, the children of the resurrection, who shall be "as the angels," and shall become sharers of the Son's throne, pass and repass throughout the regions which acknowledge Him the heir of all things; and what less shall the earth then be, than "The gate a heaven?" (Gen. 28: 17.)

And I will here further observe, as so taught by the word of God, that when heaven is thus opened upon the earth, hell will be shut; for He Who prevails to take the keys of heaven, and claim it as His throne, and to open it to all believers, Who prevails to take the key of the house of David, and in like manner to claim the earth for His footstool, and to gather His ransomed tribes and worshipping nations there, will likewise prevail to take the key of the bottomless pit and there bind and shut up the dragon. And is it not sweet in the midst of present distraction, to think on the concord of the whole acknowledged creation when thus the offence is taken away, when nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, when "there shall be one Lord and His name One?"

The vision of the glory, which Ezekiel had, appears specially to mark out this harmony throughout all the reign or the government of the Son of Man in His day: the hosts of heaven in their glories, the movements upon earth in their multiplied complexity still obedient to the same Spirit, under the sceptre of Him Who will then exercise, as now He has title to, "all power in heaven and in earth" (Ezek. 1). So this harmony is as the temple, which with its holy and most holy place, — one for the ark, the other for the footstool of our God (1 Chr. 28: 2) — was still one temple. As when Isaiah saw the Lord, He was seated within the veil, but His train filled the temple; the body of the glory in that day shall be in heaven, but its presence shall be known and felt on earth. And oh! what gladness for man then, when, like Jacob, he shall walk on the earth in the blessed consciousness that it is none other than "the gate of heaven!" — the whole earth an extended Bethel; — "The house of God,"

Thus it is said, that it is in the manifestation of the sons of God creation shall rejoice: the heavens, where the sons are set, shall shine unhinderedly upon the earth; and the creation, as it were, consciously repose in the light thereof. For all things shall be gathered into one; and though still they be things on earth and things in heaven, yet the earth shall, as it were, touch the skirtings of the heavens, as now, at times, we know not whether it be the clouds of heaven, or the high lands of the earth, that we see in the

distant shadowy prospect. Paradise with its tree of life shall be restored, without access for the Serpent; and no tree of knowledge shall be there to put man to proof of his subjection to God; but, instead of it, the priesthood of the King shall be there, witnessing to His subjection in the continued offering of praise to our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, shall be heard saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!" "They shall speak," O Jehovah-Jesus, "of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." "O Jehovah, our Lord," shall Israel and the nations sing, "how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens," and the heavens shall shout "Hallelujah."