

God's Great Ordinance.

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Article 3 of 47 **Short Meditations**

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We may have observed in John's Gospel, the zealous and determined way in which the Lord Jesus sets aside all glories which men might bring to Him, that He may establish the grace of God, or the love of the Father in Him and by Him, to poor sinners. He shines there in the glory of grace, and will not shine in any other glory. Men may be for having Him as a Teacher of Secrets, a Doer of Wonders, as a King, as a Judge, or as some One suited to be great in the world; but He sets all aside with marked and indignant earnestness, and will be known and received only as the Minister of Divine Grace, the grace of His Father, to poor sinners.

In like manner we may see how zealously God sets aside all that would stand in company with Christ, to share His place with Him, or dare to displace Him; and makes room for Him, and for Him only, as His own one great Ordinance.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the leading and closing witness of this — but there had been striking and beautiful pledges of the same in earlier days.

And here let me say, there is sweet correspondency in these two things. Christ is zealous in hiding Himself, that the grace of the Father may alone appear in Him, during His ministry; God, at all times, both before and after that ministry, would show how zealous He was, either by His hand or by His Spirit, by His providential acts or by His inspired communications, that Christ, and Christ only, should be honoured as His Ordinance. I would notice some pledges and witnesses of this.

Nadab and Abihu, with infidel daring, set aside the fire which had come down from heaven, sealing the services of Aaron, who was the type of Christ; and the hand of God peremptorily and awfully judged that, by slaying them on the spot. Penal fire avenged the strange fire which had displaced the fire which had borne witness to Christ. This was full of meaning.

Moses and Aaron exposed themselves to a like judgment — like, I mean, in character, though not in measure. It was not in infidel daring, but under the provoking and irritation of the people, that they dishonoured the Christ of God, at the waters of Meribah. But they did so. They did not sanctify God in His ordinance. They did not know the Rock that followed Israel, and which Rock was Christ; and they are at once judged to come short of the land.

This was quick resentment on the part of God of all that touched the rights and honours of Christ. There was a great moral distance between the infidelity of Nadab and Abihu, and the haste and unadvisedness of Moses and Aaron — but God's hand avenged the controversy of His Christ with all of them.

When we come to New Testament days, we find the same spirit on the holy hill. In ignorance, not knowing what he said, Peter proposed to give equal place to Moses, Elias, and Jesus. But the voice of the excellent glory would not be silent then. It is ignorance only, if we please; but the blessed God will not suffer the honour of Christ to suffer at the hand of any one or any thing. It may be but ignorance that would touch His Person or His place, and neither scorn nor temper — neither infidel daring as with Nadab, nor irritation of mind as with Moses; but still God's hand or God's voice will be present to avenge it. The voice lets Peter know that the "Beloved Son" alone is to be heard.

In John Baptist, the Spirit, in another way, does the same work, pleading the cause of Christ. John's disciples were a little moved by the multitude seeming to pass by their Master — and they resent this, as Joshua did in the cause of his Master, when Eldad and Medad began their prophesying. But John, in all gentleness but in all decision, answers this. As in the name of all his brethren the Prophets, he retires, that Jesus alone may be seen and heard. He is Elias speaking the language of the excellent glory on the holy hill. The voice there called Moses and the Prophets away from the eye and ear of Peter; John's word here withdraws himself and all his fellow-servants, the Bridegroom's friends, from his disciples and all beside, that the same "beloved Son" alone may be known. John and the excellent glory have the like thoughts of Jesus.

This is all consistent as well as blessed — and precious to see the hand of God and the Spirit of God thus agreeing to glorify Jesus.

The Epistles join in this service; rather, as I may say, the Holy Ghost in them. One need not particularize or prove this. Every Epistle has its own witness to this. That to the Colossians distinguishes itself in such a character. But in the Hebrews we see this purpose prevailing in the mind of the Spirit throughout. It is a setting aside of one thing after another, in order to have the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, God's great Ordinance, alone before us.

And they are set aside with a strong hand — as in earlier days.

Angels are first withdrawn from our sight; and He who has obtained a more excellent name than they, is brought in — and this, upon the authority of Scripture after Scripture. (1, 2)

Moses is set aside then, as a servant in the house of another, to leave the place for Him that is Lord over His own house. (3)

Joshua gave Israel no rest, and therefore is as nothing and nobody; while Jesus, the true Joshua, gives God's own rest. (4)

Aaron must yield to the true Melchizedek — for his priesthood, constituted by the law of a carnal commandment, is weak and profitless, and must give place to that priesthood of the Son, which is established in the power of an endless life. (5 - 7)

The old covenant must vanish, and that which Christ ministers continue new for ever. (8)

The sanctuary under the law witnessed no perfection in the worshipper, but ever kept him apart from the Divine presence. It must be broken down in favour of that sanctuary which by a rent veil witnesses the perfection of the worshipper. (9)

The victim under the law never accomplished atonement; but the one sacrifice of Christ has purged the conscience for ever. (10)

Thus, God's great Ordinance is set in His place, and set there all alone — angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, the old covenant, the first tabernacle, the legal sacrifice, all made to yield, and leave the entire scene, and all that belongs to it or fills it, with Him alone. And He brought in, after this manner, by the Spirit of God, is to continue before our souls for ever. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever — be not carried about"

And what the Spirit in His vessels is thus doing — what the Spirit in His authoritative teachers is thus doing — the faith of the elect, inwrought by the same Spirit, is doing likewise. Paul will say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And is not this boast in Jesus, this glorying in the Cross, the common instinctive property of every renewed mind — the inwrought, and

thus the natural sense and judgment of every saved soul?

And what harmonies are these! harmonies, too, of heaven and of earth, of all times and dispensations, of the excellent glory and of poor earthen vessels! The hand of God, the voice of the Father, the Holy Ghost in His authorized, authoritative ministers, the Spirit in every quickened, illuminated sinner, all joining in avenging the wrongs of Christ, and in honouring God's great Ordinance.