

The Accomplished Decease

Luke 9: 30, 31.

J. G. Bellett.

Article 34 of 47 **Short Meditations**

(Cavenagh, 1866.)

They *talked* of His *decease* which He was to *accomplish* — three words of sweet and various import. They tell us of the intimacy, the personal intimacy, that there is between the Lord and the elect in the realms of glory. As it was in the garden of Eden at the beginning, and then among the patriarchs, and then with the disciples and their Divine Master in the days of the Evangelists, so will it be in the ages of glory, there will be personal intimacy between the Lord and His people, so signified by the word "talk." "God talked with Abraham."

But we have the *subject* of their conversation also — it was His decease — a theme most worthy to engage the glorified hosts. We may well speak of it on every Lord's Day, in the light of the *resurrection*, since the ransomed in the heavens speak of it in the light of the glory. For it is that great fact or mystery that will be celebrated for ever, as it is the great fact that is to prove itself the pillars of eternity, the pillars of the creation of God.

And again, they will let us learn a very weighty matter connected with this subject — it was a decease that was to be *accomplished* - a word which suggests the full, finished, perfected character of the way in which that great mystery, the death of the Lamb of God at Jerusalem, was to be conducted. All due solemnity was to mark it, that nothing might be left uneffected, unproduced, or unsecured, which it was counselled to do.

And what a comfort to us sinners! The sacrifice of the Lamb of God was the precious eternal secret that was to give us blessed eternal peace; and we have to learn that all that was committed to it to do, it has done — the counsels, the throne, the weights and measures of the sanctuary of salvation, all have been satisfied to the last jot and tittle.

I would meditate on this accomplishment of the decease of the Lamb of God a little carefully.

As we read Leviticus 16, we may be impressed with the carefulness and order and exact and perfect regularity with which the Priest went through the business of the Day of Atonement. No haste, but all in well-ordered and defined exactness from first to last.

He was to *take* the appointed victims, whether bullock or goat. Then, he was to *offer* them. Then, he was to *kill* them, as in due time and order. He had then to *prepare the cloud of incense*, which was to accompany and invest him, when he went into the holiest with the blood. And (enrobed with this cloud, his simple holy linen suit, not his high-priestly garments of glory and beauty, being upon him) having entered the holiest, *he sprinkles the blood on and before the mercy-seat*; in witness that God on the throne of righteousness had accepted the sacrifice. He then comes forth, and *uses* the same blood, (the blood which had thus been accredited and sanctioned at the throne) for the reconciling of the outer places and the outer things. — no man but himself being allowed in the sanctuary while he was thus, in all this solemnity, going through the business of this mysterious day.

And having thus reconciled the outer places and things, *he lays the iniquities of the people on the head of a goat*, called the scapegoat, and sends him into a land where those iniquities could never again

be called to remembrance.

Then, arrayed with his proper priestly garments of glory and beauty, *he offers a burnt-offering* for himself, and another for the people; a witness that all this great and gracious work had issued in the worship and praise which was thus rendered to Him, by the ransomed, the blood-purchased, congregation of the Lord. And then, he puts *the fat* of the sin-offering upon the altar, in token that the blessed God had the richest portion of the feast, the deepest joy in this sacrifice and atonement, reserved for Himself — after the manner, I may say, of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal.*

*The Gospel is called, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed (happy) God," in 1 Tim. 1: 11. This is according to this ordinance, "the fat upon the altar."

The sin-offerings, both bullock and goat, were then *entirely consumed* "without the camp" — and the fit man who had taken away the scape-goat, and the other who had now thus consumed the sin-offerings, carefully purify themselves, and then take their place in the camp again.

Such was the business of this great day in Israel, the day of atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month. I affect not here to interpret it; I merely design so to present it, as to show *the careful and deliberate way in which it was accomplished*, the well-defined and well-ordered manner in which this great solemnity was gone through and celebrated in all its stages, and through the length of its proceeding, from first to last.

Now this is in company with the great substantive atonement accomplished in the hour of the Cross. With what calm, sacred, measured, well-weighed advisedness, the death of the Lord Jesus was brought to pass! Well surely might Moses and Elias have spoken to Him about His "decease" which He was to "accomplish" at Jerusalem. All along the course of His ministerial life, He had been exposed to the enmity of the world. Nay, at His very birth it was so. And at all times, man appeared to have Him at his mercy. As far as the scenes through which He passed expressed His conditions, there was no guard, no Mahanaim around Him, no angelic host ascending and descending for His security or provision. Nor would He let His voice be heard in the streets, refusing to make a party for Himself meeting confederacy by confederacy, when He might have done so. And yet, none could lay hands on Him till His hour was come. As in the fulness of time He was born, so in the fulness of time, but not till then, He must die. But when that time does come, all is fulfilled in calm, sacred, measured, well-weighed advisedness — as we may see from the hour of the last supper to the death itself.

At the Supper, as a Victim, He bound Himself to the horns of the altar. In Gethsemane, immediately afterwards, He renews this surrender of Himself to His Father. When the soldiers come to take Him, they cannot touch Him till He pleases. But in due time He puts Himself, as a *willing* captive, into their hands. He passes from the traitor-kiss of one of His own into the hands of the Jews, and from them into the hands of the Gentiles — because such things had been prophesied of him. Every jot and tittle of Scripture is fulfilled, even to His saying, "I thirst." All His foretold sorrow, in all its manifold forms of endurance and insult, was realized; the very garments also in which He suffered, and the company that were with Him on the cross. His disciples forsake Him, the sheep of the flock are scattered abroad, for thus had the Prophets written. And then, when all was finished, and the paschal hour had fully come, He went into the three hours of darkness under the bruising of the hand of God as His Lamb for the sacrifice.

The death is thus wonderful, in the very form and character of its accomplishment, as it is beyond all thought wonderful in its moral glories, and in its saving, cleansing virtues.*

*The same deliberated order marks His burial and resurrection afterwards. There is no haste,

according to the way of man, as though man had the scene in his hand, but all is in the calm and full strength of God according to counsels and prophecies. The day of the resurrection had fully to come, as well as that of the birth and death.

But in contrast with all this, let us consider, for another moment, the death of the Baptist which went before this death of the Lord Jesus, and that of Stephen which followed it. What a difference! And yet, no wonder — all is easily accounted for.

There was no value with the *throne* of God, no place in the *counsels* of God, for the death of either John or Stephen. Precious in the sight of God they were, we may assure ourselves — "but they were not important, again I say, either to the throne or to the counsels of God. Neither His righteousness nor His grace demanded them. Secrecy and haste may, therefore, give them their character and their history. Nor is it necessary that the material of them, the circumstances that accompany them, should give them any dignity. Neither of them was a "decease" "accomplished," as Moses and Elias speak of that of Jesus.

The Baptist was the victim of the wanton passion of a woman; Stephen was a martyr at the hands of the sudden, heated frenzy of a blinded and religious rabble. This was the history of these deaths. And how they set off the one we have been looking at, and which lay between them! Not that they were not, as I have already said, precious to God. Indeed they were, deeply so. (Ps. 116: 15) But they were not taken into His hand, according to eternal counsels, and according to prophecies which had gone before from the beginning, as His was. The passions of man disposed of John and Stephen. "They did to them whatsoever they listed," I might say. But the counsels and the throne of God, His righteousness and His grace, the glorious revelations of Himself, the whole story of creation in its purpose and in its results, stand to account for the death of Jesus, and have their interest in it.

With this the *convicted* sinner has to acquaint himself, in this the *believing* sinner reads his title. What an object for the sustaining of eternity, and for the joy and celebration of eternity!