

The Feasts in Deuteronomy 16

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1. THE PASSOVER, IN VERSES 1-8.

The three great feasts of Jehovah here specified were instituted by Him for the express purpose of filling the hearts of His people with the enjoyment of Himself revealed in distinct blessings. If it was so in the letter for Israel, what is taught and conveyed to us, who have the substance of these earthly shadows! For all that God wrought or gave in the times that are past is but a little thing, compared with what the incarnate Son of God presented to Him in His person, and accomplished in His death, resurrection, and ascension, that the Holy Spirit might testify to the believer a blessedness worthy of the Father and the Son. Yet who could deny that these feasts were full of rich remembrance and rich promise of mercy? What a magnificent putting forth of divine power it was to bring Israel, a then nation of slaves, from under the greatest power at the time ruling on the earth! Nor in that deliverance was it merely power. There was a far deeper question before God. Israel, no less than the Egyptians, were a sinful race. How could God make light of their sins? Against all the gods of Egypt Jehovah was about to execute judgment. Pharaoh, who denied His title to claim Israel, must be publicly humbled and punished. But withal what about the sins of Israel? Therefore, while closing His preliminary blows upon guilty Egypt, God directed the last of them to fall on the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, from the king's down to the maid's behind the mill. How then was it with His people? Were they not as real sinners as the Egyptians? And would God make light of sin because they were His own? Is not Jehovah sanctified in those that are near Him? Does it not add immensely to the horribleness of sins in His sight when they break out in one that He chooses to Himself? He had favoured and blessed their fathers, marking them out clearly for hundreds of years while growing up to be such a people as they then became.

Accordingly, He instituted the Passover, and made it the more striking, for a new reckoning commenced from that fact as a foundation for Israel. Abib was the seventh month of the civil year; "for in the month of Abib, Jehovah thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" (ver. 1). It now began the holy year. Jehovah was dealing judicially beyond all that had gone before; and the lamb's blood alone could shelter guilty Israel. It was a whole people confessing their sins and His righteousness in the same solemn sacrifice applied to every household and every soul who entered that night the blood-sprinkled doors. So we read in Exodus 12. Only observe that in Deuteronomy 16 it is simply the passover sacrificed. Nothing is said here of the blood put upon the door- posts. "And thou shalt sacrifice the passover unto Jehovah thy God, of the flock and the herd" (ver. 2).

The reason is plain. The use of the blood as on that first celebration was made but once. This intimates a great deal for the effectual reality, as well as in its typical significance, — as we may read, over and over again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. How much on the other hand among men depends on repetition! Only thus is it that ordinarily, they attain an approach to what they consider worthy. With

God Who cannot fail, any more than lie, it is quite another thing. Repetition in His institutions imposed on man means that the end is not reached. But there was only one paschal sprinkling of blood on the door-posts; nor was there failure in the then result. It was not repeated at any subsequent observance of the feast. Attention was thereby drawn to the unity of the blood-sprinkling when judgment was proceeding as never again in Israel's history. But "sacrifice" must always be, as it is, the ground of righteousness for man as he is. And whose righteousness was it? Not man's certainly but God's righteousness. So in the cross of Christ God would lay such a foundation that He might not only judge the evil, but justify the ungodly who had wrought nothing to deserve protection. It was grace therefore, but God's righteousness according to His word. It is His appreciation of Christ's work on behalf of those whose works were only evil.

All are aware that the Passover was before the law. The attempt therefore to bring in the law is plainly and absolutely excluded. Had that feast only come in after the law, there might have seemed some little ground for such an inference. Men are ready enough to catch at this or that appearance in order to lay down what pleases them. And the reason why the law pleases is because it necessarily is addressed to man himself and his works. He therefore likes it; man is somebody, and can do something. Yet the law was God's claim on man; but what He taught by it was the impossibility of pleasing God on any such ground. Here too He was showing by the passover, before the law was, His way of sheltering from judgment a guilty people by the blood He directed them to put on their door-posts. Be it that they were Israel; but their sins He could not ignore, as if they were nothing; nor must they be borne with, because they were the sins of His people. No, He found a way of righteousness, His own righteousness in the lamb that was slain; and only once was the lamb's blood put (yet in a way that brought the ground of their exemption from judgment home to each Israelite,) on the entrance to every house. No one that was there could enter save under the lamb's blood which was put, not within but, outside the house.

And what could show so clearly that it was for Jehovah's eye, not for man as a matter of sense, or mind? It was put on the two side-posts, and on the lintel for his faith simply, but all the more for the profoundest feelings of his heart. Had it been inside, it would have naturally awakened the suggestion that they were to gaze at the lamb's blood, to which they owed their security. But there was nothing of the kind, the lamb's blood was put outside; within they eat the flesh roast with fire. What makes the force of that which has been said the more evident is the fact that it was "night." There was no natural light to enable the blood to be seen of men. Only the divine eye could see the blood on the door-posts. And He was the One concerned; sins refer to His judgment. He might work by a destroyer; but it was Jehovah Who smote Egypt, man, beast, and gods; it was Jehovah Who saw the blood, and passed over Israel sheltered by it. There was the blood for the eye of Jehovah Himself to discern. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Thus and thus only could the people be screened from the destroyer.

This was the foundation of all. Man had lived upon the earth long before; he had tried his own way in every possible form. Jehovah's people too had shown what they were; as His own fidelity and goodness had failed in no way. But never before had anything for His people been wrought as a righteous groundwork till the Passover.

Here however we see in this chapter, as the people were about to enter the land of promise, the same blessed truth is recalled to mind when Jehovah gathered Israel round Himself. If the application of the blood to the door-posts, so striking and instructive on the original occasion, is left out here, even this is quite appropriate to Israel then and to the believer now. No doubt when a man is first awakened and receives the glad tidings of redemption in Christ Jesus through the shedding of His blood, imminent danger from the wrath to come clearly appeals to the soul. But after he has bowed to the

truth, he is no longer filled with alarm, still less in the same degree or way. Is it that Christ's work is valued less? A great deal more. When souls wake up at Christ's word from moral death, when they justly feel their sins in the sight of God, there are deep and vehement heart searchings and painful pressure of guilt on the conscience; and the grace of Christ administers truly divine relief. Afterwards, as the soul submits to the righteousness of God, does the value of Christ and His work diminish? It acquires a far deepening character, as faith is exercised by the word.

May I observe that there are not a few hymns tending to make people think that the first joy of looking to the Lord Jesus as the Saviour is so bright and full, that all afterwards here below becomes comparatively pale. But is this really consistent with the truth? Does scripture justify our looking back on that early and indelible hour of contrition, when the Saviour's welcome was tasted, as the fulness of blessing for ourselves? I believe that for such as do so, the heart has feebly entered into "the riches of His grace," little, if at all into what the apostle calls "the glory of His grace." Great as that mercy was, we are all entitled to "receive of His fulness," and to know experimentally depths of His grace in Himself and His work far beyond.

It is the abiding blessing of Christ in His work of redemption that is here presented. Many circumstances of the first burst of the truth on the people of God are left out, the wondrous sacrifice in itself is recalled in its simple majesty, without any particular reference to the form in which it applied in the first instance. The Spirit of God is here anticipating the way in which the passover should be kept in the land of God. Now it is precisely because the grace is anticipated of Jehovah bringing in Israel there, that no lack of care is tolerable, that the deepest call is made on their spiritual affections. It is no more leaving Egypt, nor yet the wilderness through which they passed, but Jehovah putting forth His power in new and, if possible, richer ways in bringing His people into the full accomplishment of the blessing. Does not this mark Israel entering into and dwelling in the "good" land where His eyes rest continually? So when we are first awakened, the pressure of our sense of danger is great, the urgent necessity of being screened by Christ's work from judgment because of our iniquities; but surely He and that work lead us on to appreciate far deeper things. So now we have the calm and peaceful enjoyment of a work in itself intrinsically the same, and infinite in its value. This seems to be what Jehovah would have His people enjoy in the passover kept in the land. "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto Jehovah thy God, of the flock and the herd,* in the place which Jehovah shall choose to cause His name to dwell there" (ver. 2) But while the peculiar circumstances of its first celebration disappear, there is no difference as to the unleavened bread. It may be presumed that all know that the purity which must follow "the sacrifice," means the total denial of all ungodliness and corruption, however palatable to fallen nature. In the glorious land as Daniel calls it, could there be any relaxation of purity? Here we have the unleavened bread particularly enjoined; "thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, [even] the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life." So it was then, but there is no haste now. So there was and must have been on the first occasion; they are merely reminded of this in looking back: "that thou mayest remember the day . . . all the days of thy life." It personally concerned each one. When Israel come to know Who He is that was sacrificed for them, on Whose blood hung their entire shelter, what incomparably deeper thoughts and affections will arise God-ward! No wonder will it appear then that "there shall be no leaven seen with thee in all thy borders seven days." *Our* entrance into its force is revealed in 1 Cor. 5: 7, 8. The veil done away in Christ, lies upon their heart, because they reject Him; but whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. We, not Israel, are here below keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. They will keep it when Messiah appears to their joy. They too are to eat the flesh of the lamb of which we have partaken in faith, while

they are unbelieving. Mark the deepest reverence here for the sacrifice with full liberty to eat of it. "Neither shall any of the flesh which thou sacrificest the first day at even remain all night until the morning." The lamb's flesh must never be treated as common food. What was not then eaten must be burnt, not kept for ordinary use; it was a sacrifice to God, as well as a holy communion.

*It may be well to observe that the strictly paschal sacrifice was a lamb of the flock only. But it will be seen in Num. 28 that daily during the Feast, burnt-offerings of bullocks were also sacrificed, with a ram and lambs, a meal-offering, and a goat for a sin offering and a drink-offering. This explains the "herd" here.

The grand secret of Christianity, I do not say of christendom, the everlasting and peculiar blessing that we boast before our God, is Christ Himself. Oh, what a joy to have one word that contains all that we delight in, and, what is far more important, all that God delights in, the same object, God's delight and our delight, in Him who unites Godhead and manhood in His own person! But more than that: — there was a particular time that, even for God, drew out what Christ expressed in that fact, as before prophetically, which never was before and never can be again. With reverence be it spoken, I believe that as on the one hand God never felt before as He did at the cross of Christ; so on the other hand the Lord Jesus never felt as He did save at the cross. As His Spirit predicted it through David; so did He in the garden anticipate it; and oh, what a grief and weight of conflict for His Spirit! But anticipation is not accomplishment. It was on the cross there came from Christ that expression of it, so familiar, yet so solemn, to all our souls, "My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?" There is the wondrous basis of all blessing. It is Christ forsaken of God after all the perfection of a life of obedience incomparable here below; Christ rejected and atoning for sin. What an unfathomable truth! What creature on earth or in heaven would ever have looked for it? For who was Christ? Was He not the eternal life with the Father before ever there was a creature? Was He not the Creator? Yet here He lay in death: and what a death! How did such a consummation come to pass? It was for sin; for our sins borne in His own body on the tree. This we know too well, yet alas! far too little. He, the Son, became man; man as truly as He was and is God. And God made sin for us Him Who knew no sin. Here therefore we rest on that foundation which can have no equal. God never saw anything but perfection in the Son of His love throughout eternity. When the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men, in a world of sin, that perfection was unfolded in such forms of moral beauty and grace, as were never before seen, and only in measure predicted. Truly He was the Second man and last Adam. Never did love and obedience, meekness, zeal and suffering, reach their acme till the cross. Never was God or God's Son, the Son of man, so glorified as therein. And every child of God in this hall knows it, and has, in his measure responded to it in faith. But the more we weigh it, the greatness of that work rises before our souls. The ground of righteousness is only found in that word so terrible to man's conscience — death; and wondrous to say, in His death, which was our sin (for He was rejected of men), yet on God's part a sacrifice to God. Here then dawns on us this first feast — the Passover; and more truly ours, by faith, than Israel's. They had, no doubt, their lamb; and they were entitled to enjoy the remembrance of God's deliverance of their nation from the land of Egypt. But what is that compared to God judging sin, in Christ? This is what we read in the cross of our Lord Jesus. What infinite things for our souls have we not in "the Lord's death!" What words could be put together speaking with the same power revealing a divine ground of righteousness for sin comparably with "the Lord's death?"

Consequently, there we have it before us, we have it through the infinite mercy of our God habitually and particularly on the resurrection day. There is something remarkably sweet in that, that we have His death on the day of resurrection, for it is never meant that we should be so absorbed in death as to forget the joy of resurrection.

I would only now notice the words of ver. 5, "Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates." There was to be but one place henceforth, many were allowed before. It had been taken in Egypt, house by house, and in the wilderness only at first. But now in the land where it might have seemed any place would do, because it was the holy land, Jehovah chose one sole place. He would take the matter of His blessing and of Israel's enjoyment of it entirely out of their hands, to bless them all the more because of binding it up with His presence. Jehovah chose one place and one only for the celebration of the passover; it was where He Himself dwelt. There He commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This, He said, is my resting-place for ever. Here will I dwell; for I have desired it. Such was the place that Jehovah chose for His people's eating of the passover. Thus may be seen from those early days God manifesting, particularly in the way in which it is presented in the last book of Moses, the celebration of the passover in the land, which typifies our connection with heaven. Jehovah chose, for the purpose of our enjoying His interest in us as to that which is deepest for our souls. And what goes down into such depths as the passover, especially in the light and association of heaven where He is to whom we are united by the Holy Spirit, one spirit with the Lord.

But remark, although they took it "at the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. Thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose; and thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents" (vers. 5-7), for Israel at least there was a return to their own things. It was not such peaceful communion with Jehovah as to detach them from all things in principle to Himself. They turn and go into their tents in the morning after eating the passover. They eat unleavened bread with the bread of affliction. It was far from being all that Jehovah designed and gave in the feasts to follow in due time. More was needed to impart full enjoyment of Jehovah's blessing in His chosen place. Only to the passover are these words appended; they are dropped, not only for the Feast of Tabernacles, but also for the Feast of Weeks.

Ver. 8 repeats the obligation to eat unleavened bread six days. On the seventh was a solemn assembly to Jehovah the God of Israel, and no work to be done. His work they celebrated and rested in. Only in this Feast is work here forbidden to be done.

2. — THE FEAST OF WEEKS, IN VERSES 9-12.

Then comes quite a different feast — the Feast of Weeks. What does this rest on, or spring from? Christ not in death but risen again. Not the life before He died but the life of Christ triumphing over death. This is intimated by the wave-sheaf in due time followed by the two wave loaves brought before us in the Feast of Weeks. Not only are we told (ver. 9) that Christ was the first-fruits, but that the loaves at the Feast of Weeks were also first-fruits (Lev. 23: 17). They alike receive the same name. There was nothing like this in the Passover nor is there anything like it in the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a union with Christ when we come to the Feast of Weeks, found nowhere else. The reason is plain. We are united to Christ risen and ascended. The living Christ stood alone, was heard and followed by faith; but union there could not be before His death. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Yet are we not united to Christ dead. We have all the virtue of the death of Christ and can thus more than ever enjoy all the benefits of the life and the example of the Living One; and they are both of the richest value for the believer. Indeed we must *begin* with our sins, which were in His cross met once for all. It would have been a dangerous thing to have spoken of the example of Christ before our sins are dealt with. What do we find in the disciples who followed Him every day? Did they manifest Christ? They manifested tolerably decent Jews, sometimes pious, not infrequently prejudiced, and pre-occupied with themselves. Now and then

appeared a good deal of self-righteousness, besides too, ambition and jealousy; but at what time did not self work? There never was a truth that Christ brought out to which their souls fully answered. He was always misunderstood, and even when it was a very grave misunderstanding, the Lord says, "what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." But that was what was so blessed in our Lord — His love to them always the same, His patience whatever their incapacity — spiritual incapacity. And why was this? And why spiritual incapacity? Because there never can be spiritual power till in the death of Christ I have faced my sins. No life of Christ will ever do alone, no example of Christ, except to show how unlike to Him we are. And so it is that there is far too light dealing with our state, and a total incapacity of estimating the immense distance between the Son of God and every saint that loves Him.

But now it is another thing. The state of believers in the time of our Lord was not christian. They were saints; but a Christian is a great deal more than a saint. A Christian is a saint since redemption; a Christian is a saint that is united to Christ. A Christian is a saint that rests upon the death and precious blood of Christ in all its virtue before God, which has changed everything from that moment. Now starts a new reckoning of time altogether. There is a manifest progress from what was, to what God has now given us in our Lord Jesus. What a comfort it is that every question that could arise between our souls and God is now settled! There are many saints at the present time who lose incalculably; they stop short at getting Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, if, indeed, they know this as a truth always abiding. In general, they think that the forgiveness of sins is a great privilege that is being dribbled out day by day; and that one is forgiven to-day, wanting more to-morrow, and more and more all the time one is here below. But this is not the way in which scripture puts the mighty work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we have a death that meets sins completely; nor is it merely our sins, but sin. I admit that this is beyond what we have any type for, for the types were the types of the law, and the Passover was taken up when the law was given, although it was instituted before. So also the Sabbath in the same way; the Sabbath was long before the law but nevertheless it was embodied in the law.

But "that which the law could not do" God did. And how? "Sending His own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh." It could not have been in the reality of sinful flesh. In that case He could not have been a sacrifice for sin at all. If there had been an atom of the reality of sinful flesh, if there had been a single taint, it would have destroyed the sin offering. Of the "meal-offering" which represents the life of Christ, and of the "sin" (and "trespass") offering which brings before us His death — of both these offerings are we alike told that "it is most holy." No, the Lord Jesus looked like another, therefore is it said, "in the likeness." There was nothing outwardly to distinguish the Lord, as far as His body was concerned, from another man. Mind, I am not speculating upon the Lord's appearance — I abhor all such speculations, but, at the same time, I am bound to believe from what Scripture says, that He was like any other man. Truly a man, as truly as we are, there was nothing in our Lord's outer man to indicate the essential difference, nothing to indicate that infinite difference that there is between Him and every other.

Therefore is it said, "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," or as the meaning is, "a sacrifice for sin."

Well, this is what God did, He sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin." He "condemned sin in the flesh." This is what God did. He executed sentence on the Lord Jesus at the cross. He had shown Him in the likeness of sinful flesh during His life, and there wasn't a sin nor the appearance of one. "In Him is no sin." And now there is another work, His death as "a sacrifice for sin." He condemned — not only the sins — He forgave the sins — but He condemned "sin"; He

executed sentence of death on the sin — not upon the sinner, which would have been his everlasting ruin — but on Christ. Assuredly, as "a sacrifice for sin" that we might be, not only forgiven, but that we might know the old nature completely and for ever dealt with for every believer. That is the reason why we are no longer "tied and bound with the chain of our sins," as many excellent people say that they are: some of the best in christendom. Really true saints believe that they are tied and bound by the chain of their sins. Many very earnest indeed in their way among our own nation. Others speaking our own tongue elsewhere, I must say, have shown more care for the truth of God as a general thing. But still there is that terrible lack, they don't know how God has met sin in the flesh. But this is exactly what God has said: "What the law could not do," the impossibility of the law God has done perfectly. He has executed sentence of condemnation, and the consequence is there is no condemnation for us. Not only that there is no condemnation for what we did, or have done, but there is no condemnation for the sin in our nature. That is the point of the apostle Paul in the beginning of the eighth of Romans. Then comes another thing; that is, the positive place into which we are brought. We have not to go looking for it elsewhere. And what do people substitute for that? They either fall back on the example of Christ, or they take up the law. They say, we know we could not keep the law or follow its example before we were converted, but now we are converted that is what we can do, and the Spirit will help us. But the Spirit of God will do nothing of the kind. What! the Spirit of God help people to keep the law as their rule of life! No. That the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in the Christian, I admit; and I understand the righteousness of the law consists of the two great parts — the love of God, and love to our neighbour. If a Christian does not love God and his neighbour, nobody does. There is not a single Christian in the main that is not really true. No Christian but what his heart goes out to God when he knows His love. I am supposing now a man who believes the gospel. "We love Him, because He first loved us." And what about our neighbour? I think the poorest Christian in the world is deeply anxious about the salvation of others. No doubt we are not like Christ. There is no need to say that; there is no need of crying up what a Christian is. But the new nature shows itself in every child of God by the desire for the blessing of people, with cost to itself, and further also I affirm that there is still more unqualifiedly the love of the God that has so blessed him.

But that all is not all that we find here. We have a great deal more. We have God's way of presenting it, and that is, that the believer now according to the Feast of Weeks has Christ risen from the dead, not only Christ down here as the manna, but Christ risen from the dead as his food. We see elsewhere in scripture that the heavenly food is Christ risen; Christ in heaven is the food of the believer now, and he requires it. The manna is not all, but there is Christ thus in the presence of God to feed on. There is another thing here, and that is, that "as He (Christ) is, so are we in this world." That is a wonderful thing to say. I ask this of you. If you hadn't these words in the First Epistle of John would you have believed them? If they were not written out in the Bible I should like any man in this room to say that he could have thought them? I don't believe a word of it. You are only cheating yourself if you think you could have dared to say these words. I say it again, As Christ is — not as He was, but now, in the presence of God, in all His glory there, the glorified man — "As He is, so are we in this world." So are we — not, so we shall be in the next world, but — in this world. Why, if these words were not the words of Scripture, it would be the most fearful presumption that ever passed through the heart of man to say them. But they are God's words; and they are God's words because they are His truth. They are the rich blessing He has given you and me at this very time, and, thank God, not to us only. There is no Christian here, in England, in the world but what has these words said of him, and they are meant of him and for him to take them home to his heart and live on them — at any rate upon the One into whose nearness of relationship we are now brought, into that wonderful place of union with Christ. If it were not the life of Christ that is given to us it could not be true. It is in virtue of that, that we are one

with Christ — that it can be said, "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17).

If I look at myself or you, would that warrant such language? How is it then? Why, because our oneness with Christ is, not with Christ come down to take part of our nature, but, with Him risen from the dead and gone to heaven. On what does this depend? On the Holy Spirit sent down in consequence of Christ's exaltation. And you see how perfectly the word read tonight suits it. The Feast of Weeks was the day of Pentecost — the day when the Holy Ghost was given. It could not have been true a day before. It is always true after.

We may observe that this feast differs from others in that in it we have not only our individual responsibility brought before us, as in the passover for instance, but also our privilege. In the passover we have the solemn responsibility of practical holiness being maintained, also of our life being holy — all grounded upon Christ, the Lamb slain.

But here we have another thing, not our responsibility but our privilege. Now we have this new privilege that could not be in the least degree entered into by a Jew at that time. Now we can read, and are bound to read, these Jewish forms in a light that they did not possess or enjoy. The heavenly light shines upon us because Christ is in heaven. He is that light. That is the meaning of the day dawning and day star arising in the heart, of which Peter speaks in his Second Epistle (chap. 1). "And we have the prophetic word confirmed, to which we do well to take heed (as to a lamp shining in a dark place);" it is more than dark, it is squalid as well as dark. Look at all the prophecies, the terrible state of man which they show; for prophecy came in when things were in a state of ruin. That however is not Christianity. The blessedness of Christianity came when Christ came, when Christ died, when Christ arose and went up to heaven still more. This is the day dawn.

Now then here we have the rising to a height that cannot be exceeded, and it is all in Christ. How precious! Not only that we have all the blessedness of judgment stayed, of sins gone, and sin itself judged in that same death of Christ — all His mighty work in our favour to draw out the sense of God's love and to produce love to God as well, as nothing else could, — but now it is the enjoyment of this wondrous place of Christ, a new place even for Him. Great is the mystery of godliness, "God has been" or "He who has been manifested in flesh . . . received up in glory." What is the mystery of godliness? People might have thought that it is something we can do, something the Holy Spirit would work in us, but no, the mystery of godliness is Christ Himself, it is bound up with Christ.

This is what we find in these three Feasts, Christ in the Passover — Christ in the Feast of Weeks — the Spirit of God come down; but *He* was not the new corn of the land — the corn of wheat, that had fallen into the ground and died, but is now risen. No, Christ is that, and we are part of the same stock. We have the same nature — made "partakers of a divine nature." Christ is risen and He is our life, we have not only the life but we have also the Holy Ghost to give divine power of enjoyment of the life, which can never be unless the heart surrenders itself to the death of Christ. People stop short of that; they don't know the power of His resurrection till the power of His death is known. And that is what makes a full gospel of such grand importance for the saint. There is a great difference between a free and a full gospel. A free gospel is the finest thing possible for the sinner. A full gospel is not for the sinner but rather for the saint. I might say Peter preached a free gospel, and three thousand were converted on the first occasion. Paul preached a full gospel. There is this difference that the preaching of Paul was most rich and profound and of the greatest possible blessing where it was entered into. It is all there for us and we ought not to come short of it, and if it is for us to know, it is for us to preach. But the grand point for us is to take it into our souls. When that is done there is full blessing now. It is the life for evermore, where death can never enter, where sin never did enter. Now there is delivering

power and that is the power that works in us. That is our portion by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, for that blessed Person is always at any rate faithful to Christ, and to Christ not merely dead, but risen from the dead. He never stops short at the death of Christ — He would have that death entered into in all its sweetness — and in many respects there is nothing like it, but still there is this power in resurrection that we do well not to lose, and the Holy Ghost would have us follow Christ in faith where He is, and to know that our portion is in Himself there.

His death! It was for us, but now in His resurrection and His present place in heaven we are there in Him. As Christ is, so are we in this world. Connected with this I would just add one word. It is remarkable that the day of Pentecost was the day when the law was given. The law was given on the first Pentecost — not yet called Pentecost in the same way as now, but still it was fifty days after the wave sheaf and there was the law, and oh! what weakness, what death, and what misery, just because the law was good and we bad, because Christ was not there. But now that Christ has come, everything is turned into blessing. The judgment of God! Yes, because it fell on Him, it was due to us but it fell on Him, and surely it is an immense thing to know that; and can anything show more clearly where these dear evangelical people are than the fact that this great truth of the gospel is not believed. The wonderful thing is that they are so good practically with so little truth to be their foundation. It is a vital truth of the gospel that the believer shall not come into judgment.

I lost a most valued friend years ago by insisting upon that great truth — a lady of remarkable spiritual power, more so than most women I have ever met. She never came into communion. There were great difficulties. Her family dependent upon her being faithful to what they called their own mother the church, and there she was — much to be felt for. She had been a Roman Catholic and had married a High Churchman who died and whose children were bound very strictly indeed. She however could not get over that difficulty in her mind. I have found few persons that more appreciated the truth as far as she knew. But when she heard this wondrous truth of the gospel, she thought it peculiar and something out of the common rut — this rich wondrous truth which has been so fully brought out of late years. But no, my dear friends, this truth is bound up with the gospel. It is a full gospel.

There is nothing more wonderful than a full gospel — the gospel as Paul preached it. As the Lord said in John 5, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word," not the word of Moses or the prophets now, "and believes him," not believes *on* Him, that is, about it, but "believes him that sent me." The essence of faith is that I believe God, that I believe what God says. He that, through hearing Christ's word, believes God that sent Him "hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment," not merely "condemnation." Our translators of 1611 changed it to that, and I have never met with one of these evangelical, pious, people — even the most intelligent, that believed that he should not come into judgment. They think that the believer will come into it, but be kept and brought through it. But, let me tell you, if the believer goes into the judgment he would not, could not, get through it, because he is not guiltless. Even David felt this when he said "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps. 143: 2). And the judgment is a real thing. It is a foolish thing to go into a judgment that is unreal, and the idea of God's sparing anyone is an impossibility. This idea of the believer going into judgment undoes the effect of Christ's redemption. It is true that they think that the blood of Christ will speak in the day of judgment. But no, no one will speak in the day of judgment but the Judge. There are the books, and they are opened, and the books speak of the guilt of the man and the guilt is undeniable, and so there can be no issue from judgment but to be cast into the lake of fire. There is no soul but a sinful soul that passes through the judgment. The believer's judgment is past, that has been borne by Christ for all who believe. We shall not stand before the great white throne. We shall tell all out, or, "be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ;" we shall confess everything there,

but that is a totally different thing to being "judged." Being judged means that I suffer for what I have done, and if that is so what could it be but everlasting ruin! But it is not so. It would be a total denial of, a total inconsistency with, life eternal. Impossible that a person who has life eternal could be judged! A man who has life eternal, judged! such a judgment would be a mockery. The whole thing is a jumble of mistake. However, this dear friend presented my letter setting out the truth on the subject to the then Bishop of Carlisle, and he was horrified.

I mention this to show that nothing startles these people more than a full gospel. A free gospel presents rather what we are delivered from. It is a mercy to have got thus far, but I do believe that those I am addressing to-night are peculiarly responsible to God, that if they have got the truth fully for themselves, and I don't deny that they have, they are responsible to make it known to those who may not have had such opportunities. I don't deny that they ought to break it up into the smallest pieces to suit palates and the weakest stomachs. It is right to think of the state of souls, but we should seek to lead them on, little by little, and not to leave them where they are.

That is the danger of too great quickness in receiving into fellowship. Souls should be led on to know the gospel — a full gospel, otherwise they remain where they are in their souls. We are all to blame. Instead of teaching them about the antichrist and Babylon and the woman of the seven hills (all very interesting and profitable, in its proper place), let us seek that souls should hear and believe the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. For what are all these things compared with a sound and full gospel as a foundation for the soul — to know that all the evil is cleared away in the death of Christ now, that we are in the unclouded favour of God, and that Christ's place is ours? No doubt, it is entirely through Him and His death. It is not merely that we look back but we look up to where He is now, we know that we are one with Him who is there. That is the grand truth of this Feast of Weeks.

"Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a free will offering of thine hand." Well, undoubtedly, this free will offering of the hand is a bright testimony in its own way. The free will offering of the hand is supposed to represent the heart, and so it does. It is one who is delighting in Christ, for we are delivered from all unreality, from all appearances, and it is the saddest disgrace for a Christian if the heart is not behind all that the hand does. "Which thou shalt give unto Jehovah according as Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee." The essence of Christianity is our personal blessedness now. We are not only a forgiven people, but a people blessed; and how far? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." Well, that is just the Feast of Weeks, and as there is this blessing — the richest possible for God even for us now on the earth — mark the effect (ver. 11), "thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter," but it does not end there, "and thy manservant, and thy maidservant." The blessing is to be felt by those that serve in the humblest position. Is it for those in the houses only? No, "and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you" — the specimens of the various classes of sorrow and need that are in this poor world. There we have the opening of the heart to all. Truly this is divine love, that if we are thus blessed the heart opens in love both Godward and manward too, and wherever there is most distress, there it goes out the most actively.

"And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt" (ver. 12). This is not a man tied and bound with the chain of his sins. No, he remembers that he was a bondman. It is the denial of that. It is not that you get the denial of it simply in the eighth of Romans, but here you have it in the type of Deut. 16. The apostle presents it thus — "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 12). So, manifestly, I am no longer in bondage, but delivered. It is "the law of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Had it been the law of Moses, I would be under bondage, and that is the reason really why these pious people are tied and bound with the chain of their sins. The law is continually before their eyes. When we are looking at Christ, we do fulfil what is according to the law; Christ in that case fills the heart. "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe, and do these statutes." That is, the spirit of obedience is strengthened in the soul in the highest degree by the sense of this complete deliverance and this blessed union with Christ.

Can there then be more blessing than this? There is a third Feast. How truly is it written that "all things are ours"! If one were a Jew and not a Christian, he could only keep one at a time. One he was bound to observe, the Passover, first and alone then as the others came, each could only be kept separately. Indeed the Feast of Tabernacles points to a new and future state of blessedness. But "all things are ours"; and we are meant to have all these joys, once tasted, together in our hearts and to have them always, if we are given to know them from God.

Here we read in verse 13, "Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days." The day of Pentecost, if only one day, brings us pre-eminently into the anticipated joy of what is heavenly, eternal. It is based on the wave-sheaf exhibited in the wave loaves. A course of time here below is not marked in it as in the Passover on the one hand, nor on the other in the Feast of Tabernacles. Seven days, are an earthly period. There is no such thing in the Feast of Weeks. In a certain sense Pentecost, although a day marked off from all others, is the emblem of that which has no end. As one with Christ we enter into the things above and unseen which are eternal. There will never be a time when we shall lose the Spirit of God, not even in heaven. So our Lord gave commandments to the apostles through the Holy Spirit after He rose from the dead (Acts 1: 2). He received the Spirit at His baptism (Luke 3), and again in heaven, as the Father's promise, to shed forth on us (Acts 2: 33). For in virtue of redemption we have the Spirit too. We shall not lose the Spirit when we rise. It would be an irreparable blank if we had the Spirit no more when in heaven. But there it will no longer be His gracious condescension in working in us that we may judge ourselves and correct our faults. Alas! that a great part of His work now is not only ministering to us the blessedness of Christ but dealing with our short comings; in heaven it will be so no more: every affection will rise in worship, or go forth in service. He will have nothing to correct. All will go out in power and sweet savour to God. But here we have this Feast of Tabernacles seven days. How comes it to pass and when do the seven days of glory — seven days of grace crowned by that which does not end at all — Pentecost — come on?

We enter into the power of the resurrection at the same time that we rest upon the foundation of His death. But now here we have another thing. We have Christ in heaven and we have Christ coming again, so that all our blessing is bound up with Christ, and so we read "after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine." Now I think that none can have any doubt as to the meaning of the gathering in of the corn and the wine. You are all familiar with the gathering in of the corn — the harvest. The harvest is typical not only of the Lord's coming, but coming to judge; and farther, you know that there is another type — the vintage — still more tremendous. In the harvest, there is the gathering out of the good as well as the execution on the bad; but in the vintage there is nothing but the trampling down of that which is most hateful to God; and what is that? It is the religion of the world. When God is dealing simply with the world some will be gathered in, for of some, although just like the rest, grace will make a difference. But God has no measure of His abhorrence of the religion of the world. The vine of the earth, that which is of the earth, earthy — taking the place of the true Vine, after the true Vine had been here; but how horrible in the sight of God! how hateful to God! and accordingly there is nothing but trampling down in His fury. The Lord Himself will do it. After that, the Feast of Tabernacles will come. And what is after the Lord's accomplishment of His judgment on the earth? Well, it is the day of

glory. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; therefore, as I have said, there will be a stated and full time of glory — seven days. Just as there was a stated and full time of grace, so here there is a stated and full time of glory. But we are not waiting for that time in order to enter into the joy of glory. We see the glory, in its best case and highest power, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently it is said not only that the Spirit of God rests upon you, that is Pentecost; but the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. So we are entitled to keep the Feast of Tabernacles too.

And what belongs to the Feast of Tabernacles? "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son and thy daughter," — practically the same thing as before. "Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto Jehovah thy God in the place which Jehovah shall choose: because Jehovah thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine *hands*." There is not a word of this said before. *That* will mark the day of glory, not only personal blessing, that is really now for all that are Christ's; but what will be then, "bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands." That is not the case now. There is many a saint now with whom all things go wrong, people are tried in every way, the apostles were the very off-scouring of all things, set forth the last, set forth as a spectacle to the world; that is not a blessing on the increase of the works of the hands! And where, on the contrary, people flourish in the things of this world the Lord intimates that it is hard, not impossible but hard, for such to enter into the kingdom of God. It is a difficulty but not an impossibility; but then there will be no difficulty. The time is coming to bless everything, not only persons, separated from all the rest of the world; that is now where the blessing comes on souls high or low; they are called out from the world, they are called not to go with the world in the slightest degree, as the Lord said, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (John 17: 16).

Whereas in that day the world is to be blessed. Then will be the time when the Lord *will* ask for the world. He does not pray for it now. "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me: for they are thine." That is what came in at Pentecost; but in the future He will ask for the world, and He will have it, and more than that, Jehovah will have it full of blessing every where. That is the Feast of Tabernacles. The universal blessing — all but universal blessing. There will be exceptions even in that time, just to show it is not the eternal state although the spirit of that day will have come.

"Because Jehovah thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose" (vers. 15, 16).

Here we have a blessed setting out of our portion. May the Lord grant that our unfeigned confidence may be in Himself, that our joy and delight may be, above all, in that Christ that covers everything.

If I look at the dark side, there is death that covers it now; the blood is before God; not our folly not *our* death. His death! That has changed all for us. If I look up, there, He is in all the glory and perfection of His person and according to the counsels of God, I am placed there in Him. And so you are, so are you; and this is the portion of all that are His. As Christ is, so are we in this world. And if we look forward — there is nothing to fear in looking forward, there is all the fulness of blessing in all the increase of the works of the hands in that day. For the time will then have come for the day of blessing — the Melchisedec priesthood — not merely the principle of it, but the exercise of it, and not only according to the order of Melchisedec as now. Then will be the true Melchisedec bringing forth the bread and the wine, that it may not be simply meeting the necessary wants of the body, but everything that can cheer the heart of God's people here below.

W.K.