

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”—Revelation xxii. 3.

WE shall take these words as referring to heaven. Certainly it is most true of the celestial city, as well as of the millennial city, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. This theme of surpassing interest intimately concerns all of us who are believers: for to the rest eternal at the foot of the throne we are constantly looking. Were it otherwise, I fear there would be little prospect of our ever passing the heavenly portals. We do not suppose that a man is shooting at a target if he does not look that way; nor can we imagine that a man's ambition is fixed on heaven if he has no heavenward thoughts or aspirations. The pilgrim turns his steps towards the place he is desirous to reach. What though he cannot catch a glimpse of the distant spot which is the goal of his hope, yet his eyes are in that direction. Let him climb a hill on a clear day, and you will see how he strains his eyeballs to catch a glimpse of tower or spire, minaret or battlement, of the city he is seeking. When he descends the valley, and the outlook is dreary, he solaces his soul with songs in the night that tell of “a day's march nearer home.” The anticipated greetings of friends gladden his heart. After a noble fashion the prospect of heaven lights up our sad days with gleams of glory; while our happy Sabbaths here below have often made us long for the sanctuary on high. In the crowded courts of this Tabernacle our fancy has pictured the Temple above of living stones and countless worshippers. Bunyan speaks of Mount Clear from which with aid of telescope the celestial city might be descried in the distance. We have enjoyed intervals when no clouds or mists have obstructed our outlook, and these have usually come to us on the Lord's days. A friend of mine when he went to reside in Newcastle-on-Tyne was looking over a newly-built house that was to let; and as he looked out of the window in the top room, the landlord said to him, “You can see Durham cathedral from here on a Sunday.” My friend, failing at first to catch his meaning, said, “Why on Sunday more than any other day?” “Well,” said he, “the furnaces are not going, and the smoke is not rising to darken the

atmosphere." I was not surprised to hear that the passing incident supplied my friend with a parable the next time that he preached. On special Sabbaths we peer into the city of which our text says, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." God grant that our meditations may stir your upward longings, and that our discourse may excite your desires towards heaven.

Come, then, let us think upon the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and of the place where it is. But stop a moment; I want you to look round and take a preliminary survey of the scene. Do you notice that this throne is the "throne of God *and of the Lamb*"? Doubtless you know where John got that phrase, that title for Christ—"the Lamb." It is almost peculiar to himself. You catch the note in Isaiah; Jesus is celebrated as a lamb in his prophecies. You hear the name in an epistle of Peter, and in the Acts of the Apostles as a quotation from the evangelical prophet. But with John it is a most familiar term. John, the best beloved of all the disciples of Jesus, loves this sweet symbol, and delights to speak of his Lord as "the Lamb." This John had been a disciple of that other John, the Baptist, whose chief and choicest sermon, which lingered most in his mind and memory, was couched in words like these—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John the Baptist struck a note which vibrated throughout the whole life of John the Divine. In Patmos John recalls his early impressions, for old men delight in the scenes and sayings of their youth.

When John began his gospel, he was absorbed in "*the Word*;" now that he unfolds the wondrous scroll of vision he portrays "*the Lamb*." As the key-note of Redemption the name recurs frequently in his writings, and in his closing book the name comes back to him with all its music, and he dwells upon it with evident delight. The word "*arnion*," as used in the book of Revelation, might be translated "a little lamb." It is a diminutive in the Greek text, expressive, as Dean Woodhouse observes, of tenderness and love; and in such sense our Saviour himself used it in addressing Peter, after his resurrection—"Lovest thou me? feed my lambskins." I refer to the idiom without any wish to see the common rendering altered; but it seems to show a marvellous degree of familiarity in John's mind with his blessed Master, when he looks upon him as the little lamb to be loved, for you know how wont we are to express affection in diminutive terms. "My little dear," or "my little darling," are expressions that trip sweetly from our tongues. On the other hand, were we to say, "my dear big daughter," or "my dear tall son," the words would sound awkwardly. We naturally give diminutive names to our favourites. Thus you will observe, dear friends, that while our divine Lord has names of infinite majesty which appeal to our loftiest homage, he has also names of pure simplicity, like "the holy child Jesus" and "the little lamb," when he appears to us innocent as a babe, or suffering as a sacrifice.

I. The sublime adoration of the heavenly host is offered to the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. In order to behold the throne of God, and of the Lamb, you must first of all get a sight of the Lamb. I invite you, therefore, in the words of John the Baptist, to "BEHOLD THE LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look at him in

the dawn of his ministry, when first he comes within the range of mortal vision—a man, a lowly man, one chosen out of the people. About him there is neither form nor comeliness to make him at all remarkable; he is one who did not strive, or cry, or cause his voice to be heard in the streets; not a pretentious, nor an ambitious man, but one who could say of himself, and nobody could gainsay it, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He was born in Bethlehem; he grew and waxed strong in spirit; he increased in wisdom and stature. I suppose that when he was a child he spake as a child, understood as a child, and thought as a child: I know that he abode with his parents, and was subject to them. In his mature years, when he was manifested to Israel, we behold him, the sinless One, endowed with the common faculties and afflicted with the common infirmities of our mortal race. He suffered the breath of slander, he wept with mourners; he groaned beneath the burden of care, and smarted under the pangs of pain. He lived and he died in the presence of many witnesses: what further evidence could be desired that Jesus was a man and not a myth, a lamb-like man, and none of your pretenders to greatness?

His character, too, is so purely natural that the example of excellence he sets needs no explanation. The gentle disposition that drew little children around him, the kindly temper that bore reviling without anger, the love he showed to the poor and destitute, the respect he paid to the outcasts of society, and above all his kindly notice of publicans and harlots, as sheep gone astray who were capable of being restored, claim our gratitude, and cause us to regard him as the model of goodness for all generations. Such is the man whom all the kindreds of this earth must ultimately acknowledge as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” How lamb-like he is!

Thus you see the Lamb of God among men: will you track his footsteps still farther on till he becomes the Lamb of sacrifice, and actually takes the sin of man upon himself, that he may bear its penalty? What an extraordinary night that was when he rose up from the supper table and said to his disciples, “Let us go hence.” He went to a certain garden where he had been accustomed to spend nights in meditation; he went there to pray. And oh, what a prayer it was; such surely as heaven never heard before nor since. In an agony he prayed more earnestly, and yet more earnestly, till “he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground.” He cried to the Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Then did the heavy cloud of human sins overshadow his soul, and the ghastly terrors of all his people’s guilt brood over his spirit. He proved the hour of dread and the power of darkness. Arrested by one who had eaten bread with him, he was betrayed into the hands of conspirators. By an apostle who turned apostate he was sold for a few paltry pieces of silver. From the place of private retreat, and of secret prayer, he was hurried off to prison and to judgment. Before Herod and Caiaphas, and then before Pontius Pilate, was he arraigned. All through the night he was falsely accused and foully mocked, scourged, spit upon, and treated with the utmost contempt. So was his heart broken within him because of the reproaches of them that reproached God which fell upon him. Deserted by his disciples, denounced by the priests, despised by the populace, he was at length delivered up to the malice of his foes, and, sentenced by

Pilate, he was led away to be crucified: still his patience was conspicuous, and when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter he opened not his mouth.

Now you shall see the full weight of sin pressing upon "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Every morning and every evening there had been a lamb sacrificed in the tabernacle as the type and emblem of this Lamb of God who was yet to come. A pretty little innocent lamb that a child might fondle was brought up to the priest, and its warm blood was made to flow in pain, and it was offered as a sacrifice upon the altar. But now *he* comes—the last of all lambs, the first too—the real lamb, the Lamb of God, of which the others were but types. Him they took, silent, passive, submissive, and nailed him to a cross. There he hung in the glare of the sun till the torture of tender nerves in his hands and feet produced such fever in his flesh that he said, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Such was the dissolution of his entire frame it seemed as if he had no longer a solid body: it was melted with bitter pain. There he hung, men jeering him, till at last the sun could bear the sight no longer, and veiled his face; the earth could no more endure to be the stage for such a tragedy, and began to rock and reel; the very dead were stirred as though they could not slumber in their graves while such a deed was done, so tombs were opened and many arose. Oh, it was a wondrous spectacle. Those that saw it smote upon their breasts, and went upon their way. It was the Son of God "bearing, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Behold him, bruised between the upper and nether millstones of divine justice in thy stead and mine, that God, without the violation of his holy law, might turn to us in infinite mercy and blot out our transgressions and quench the devouring fire of his wrath. Say, then, beloved, have you ever seen this sight? Have you so seen it as to sing with our poet—

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there"?

Do you trust him? Are you believing him? His cry from the cross is "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Have you so looked? If so, then you have had the preliminary sight: and I pray God so to strengthen the eyes of your understanding that you may gaze more intently on this vision of the Apocalypse—"The throne of God and of the Lamb."

II. BEHOLD THE THRONE. Let us see it first from the Lamb's side of it. Of course there is only one throne: God and the Lamb are not divided. The Lamb is God, and the interests of God and the Lamb are one. The one kingdom of God, even the Father, is identical with the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the oneness of the throne, we proceed to inspect it from the point of view in which the Lamb chiefly challenges our notice. You will remember that he is portrayed to us as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." So John beheld him, as you read in the fifth chapter of the Revelation and

sixth verse. But I would not have you make any mistake about the meaning of that phrase. Dr. Watts constructed a poor paraphrase of the passage when he said—

“Our Jesus fills the middle seat
Of the celestial throne.”

There is no such idea in Holy Scripture. The midst of the throne means the front of the throne, according to the Greek. The Lamb was not on the throne in that vision, but standing immediately before it. That is a position in which our Lord Jesus Christ would have us see him. I will show you presently that he is *on* the throne according to our text, but not according to the passage which I have just now quoted. In the previous narrative of the fifth chapter, where the Lamb is said to be in the midst of the throne, means in the front of it, in the centre, standing there that we might draw near and approach the throne through him. To the awful throne of God there could be no access except through a Mediator; he stands therefore in the front of the throne between us and the invisible, sovereign God, an interposer and interpreter, one of a thousand, the daysman who can lay his hand upon both. This is a beautiful thought. Jesus, according to the former vision of this revelation, is in the front of the throne where God always sees him before he sees us. I cannot endure the sight of God until I see him in Christ; and God cannot bear the sight of me till he sees me in Christ. Wonderful is that text in the book of Exodus, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” He does not say, “When you Israelites see the blood I will pass over you.” Why, they were not in a position to see it; for they were inside the house, and the blood was outside, on the lintel and on the two side-posts. It is true, they had seen the Lamb as it was slain, for you remember that the whole assembly of the congregation was to kill it between the two evenings; and they also saw the sprinkling of the blood: but their safety did not depend so much upon their having seen it as upon God’s continually seeing it,—“When I see the blood I will pass over you.” In like manner the covenant security of the saints arises rather from God the Father looking to his Son Jesus Christ as their surety and sacrifice, than from the constant exercise of their faith. Hence we rightly plead in our hymn:—

“Him and then the sinner see :
Look through Jesu’s wounds on me.”

There, then, our Lord Jesus stands in front of the throne interceding for us, interposing for us, opening the way for us to approach to God, even the Father.

I have drawn your attention to this previous vision as a preliminary to that of our text, in which the position of Jesus Christ is upon the throne reigning there, clothed bodily with all the power of the Godhead. Do not forget that it is even so. The Lamb is on the throne. Co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God he is, very God he always was. We do not forget the glory which he had with the Father or ever the earth was, but it is as God-man Mediator that he is now, in his complex person, invested with heavenly honours.

"This is the Man, th' exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore.
But when our eyes behold his face,
Our hearts shall love him more."

The full glory of his Person as Son of God and Son of man shall be manifested when he shall be beheld upon the throne of God. He who once appeared as the sacrificed and slaughtered Lamb shall reign with supreme authority; the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. It is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The power thus conferred upon him the Lamb not only possesses by right and title, but he exercises it in deed and in truth. "All power," said our risen Redeemer, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He ruleth now with unlimited sway: and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre. As Joseph was exalted in Egypt, and Pharaoh said, "See, I have set thee over all the land; and the people cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt": even so we read of Jesus, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in the glory of God the Father." The rebellious are not exempted from his rule. What though they conspire against him, they shall be utterly confounded. One might fancy that there was a slight strain of language in Pharaoh's fiat, that "without Joseph no man shall lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt"; but there is no exaggeration if we apply the words to Christ, for it is a fact that every man living is responsible to Jesus for the thoughts and imaginations of his heart. He is King for ever. The throne of heaven is the throne of God and of the Lamb. His dominion over nature always appears to me a delightful contemplation. I like to think of the sea roaring and the floods clapping their hands in his praise. He it is who makes the fields joyful and the trees of the forest glad. His pencil paints the varied hues of the flowers, and his breath perfumes them. Every cloud floats o'er the sky wafted by the breath of his mouth. Lord of all the realms of life and death, his providence runs without knot or break through all the tangled skeins of time. All events, obvious or obscure, great or small, are subject to his influence, and fostered or frustrated by his supremacy. The Lord reigneth, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

Thy royal prerogative, O Lamb of God, extends over all the realms of grace. Thou, O Lord Jesus, dost dispense mercy as seemeth good in thy sight. As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickens whom he will, even so he has given to the Son to have life in himself, and to quicken whomsoever he pleases. As head of the church, his benign control is absolute amongst the members of his body. In the bestowment of spiritual gifts, and in the appointment to sacred offices, he rules and regulates, and nothing is too minute to escape his notice. How pleasant to my poor heart to think that he who bowed his head to shame is now exalted, as God over all, to such a seat of honour. I feel that no odium I could incur, no injury I could sustain in preaching his name and publishing his fame, could be of any account in comparison with my joy in seeing him exalted. Let me starve in a garret or die in a ditch if

only Christ be glorified. The old soldiers of Napoleon, rank and file, revelled in the triumphs of their general. When they fell on the battlefield, with shouts of victory ringing in the air, they seemed to think light of death so long as the emperor had won renown, and the eagles of France were in the ascendant. Live for ever, royal Lamb! Reign for ever, victorious Lord! As for us, who or what are we? Brethren, let us follow him in the tribulation of the hour while the fight is fierce, so shall we find ourselves in his train when his triumph is trumpeted forth before the assembled universe. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

What lowly reverence we owe to him who occupies such a throne of boundless empire! Approach him then with profound humility; but mingle therewith the most childlike confidence. Beloved, we see before us the grandeur of God and the gentleness of a Lamb. The infinite Creator and the innocent creature are linked together in lovely union. He who is God over all, blessed for ever, has resources amply sufficient to meet your utmost wants. You do not come to a finite helper when you draw near to Christ. In trusting to the merit of his blood, you have an all-prevalent plea and full security for pardon, peace, and acceptance. You come to the throne of the Lamb, and that throne of the Lamb is the throne of God. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." There is no stinted provision in such a treasury. All the riches of the glory of God are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and Christ has all this wealth to bestow it all upon his redeemed family. I do not know what hope and expectations the Socinian can cherish with a Man-Christ, or an Angel-Christ, or a semi-divine Christ, as a guide to immortality. They may honour Jesus of Nazareth for the purity of the life he lived on earth, but I want God in human flesh to save my soul, the death of the Son of God to wash away my sin. I find the fight of life so fierce that no right hand but that which made the heavens can ever give me the victory. I stay myself on the incarnate God who bled and died, and is gone into the excellent glory, and sits down there upon the throne, Lord over all: I trust his saving strength to bear me through. Let me challenge you, my hearers. Are you trusting him and staying yourselves only and wholly upon him? Could you be content with any one less than a divine Saviour? If you are born from above you could not. Magnify his name then, and worship him in the quiet of your hearts at this good hour.

Well, that is the aspect of the throne from the side of the Lamb. Let us now take another look and behold *the throne of God*. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. The throne of God, if we view it as sinners, with a sense of guilt upon our conscience, is an object of terror, a place to fly from. Our poet was right when he said—

"Once 'twas a seat of burning wrath,
And shot devouring flame:
Our God appeared, consuming fire
And vengeance was his name."

I recollect when I had such terrible apprehensions of God, and I know that they were founded upon truth, for the Lord is terrible to unforgiven

men. Now I do not disdain, as some do, to sing "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Not that there has been a change in God. It is the view of God which the sinner is able to take which has been changed, and that change has been effected by Christ. From everlasting to everlasting Jehovah is the same: in him there is no variableness. Jesus did not die to make the Father love us, or to melt his aversion into affection. Nay, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he loved us with an eternal love and chose us in the person of Christ before the foundation of the world. Still his justice was outraged by the transgressions we committed: and as a holy and just Sovereign his anger was kindled against us as sinners; and that anger was no less justly appeased by the death of Christ, when he put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself. By his precious blood a full atonement was made. Henceforth, eternal praises to his name, the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. It is a throne of righteousness, but no less a throne of grace. There, on the throne of the Almighty, mercy reigns. According to the merit of the sacrifice and the virtue of the atonement all the statutes and decrees of the kingdom of heaven are issued. The altar and the throne have become identical. From that throne no fiery bolts can ever again be hurled against the believer, for it is the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God. Oh, what comfort there is for suffering saints in this conjunction of majesty and mercy on the throne of the Highest.

The sovereignty that is signified by this throne must certainly be unlimited. The throne of God is the throne of an absolute monarch who doeth as he wills among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world. From that throne the proclamation comes like a peal of thunder, "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." God's throne of sovereignty is not a throne of arbitrary power, for the Lord is perfect and holy, and his will is just and right. In acting according to the purpose of his own will he abounds towards us in all wisdom and goodness. The sternness of law is linked with the sweetness of love; because while the throne of heaven is the throne of God, it is still the throne of the Lamb. I fear that I fail to find the words that will express my thoughts; but this empire of God and the Lamb endears itself to our hearts. There is about it a kingly kindliness, and a majestic mercy most charming to the mind. Do any ask, What throne is that? To whom does it belong? We answer,—it is the throne of the great and glorious God, and it is the throne of the lowly lovely Lamb. The glorious Lord is gentle as a child; the lamb is lordly as a lion. Referring to the Book sealed with seven seals, described in the fifth chapter, St. Bernard said, "John heard of a lion and saw a lamb; the lamb opened the book and appeared a lion." But, behold, here it is, "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Put off thy shoes from thy feet, O seer; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, for God is here. Come, little children, there is charm enough to entice you; for the Lamb is here. It is the throne of God, therefore fall down before it with awe and self-abasement; but it is the throne of the Lamb, and therefore you may stand up before it without fear. Does not a rich blend of splendour and tenderness dawn on your apprehension? Are you not sensible of some present effect on

your souls? Do you not feel the charming sweetness and the overpowering light? John tells us in the first chapter what his own sensations were, when the Son of man appeared to him in the midst of the seven candlesticks, vested with the insignia of Priest and King. First, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Then he adds, "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am"—Ah! when you recognize who he is, fear gives place to faith, and trust succeeds to trembling. Be of good courage, then, ye faint and timid disciples. Why do ye come creeping with bated breath to the throne of heavenly grace? Will ye always cry in the same strain, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"? Such ye were, but ye are not so now. You are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You are his dear children. You have received the spirit of adoption. When ye pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Let it be your pleasure, as it is your privilege, to hold nearer intercourse with God than Israel did, for no bounds are set about the mount. They had to stand at a distance; they dared not draw near lest they should die; they did even treat that the terrible words might not be spoken to them any more; but you are a people near to him and dear to him, and the throne to which you owe allegiance is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I am painfully conscious, as I proceed, that the subject is too much beyond my grasp to mould it into a sermon. This is not preaching. I have been merely holding up the text, and trying to suggest thought after thought, as the glory of my Lord's kingdom occurred to my mind. But what can any of us say in the presence of God and of the Lamb? Our proper position is to fall down upon our faces and worship. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: pure and sinless as they were, their homage was lowly and obeisant. Each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he fly. In the presence of the Eternal, language fails us except the one adoring cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." The only other exclamation appropriate to utter would be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."

One fact remains to be noticed—it is this: the throne of God and of the Lamb is in heaven. **BEHOLD THEN THE THRONE IN HEAVEN.** We must pass beyond this earthly region, and join the company of those who people the celestial realm before we can see the throne of God, so as to obtain a complete view of it. Is not this among the chief joys of heaven?

"I'd part with all the joys of sense,
To gaze upon thy throne.
Pleasures spring fresh for ever thence,
Unspeakable, unknown."

There are many ideas of heaven, and I suppose, according to each man's character, will be the prospects he cherishes, and the answer he gives when the question is asked—"What must it be to be there?" There is ample scope for imagination, so abundant are the joys which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. There is the great wall, with

its twelve glittering foundations, and there are the twelve gates, and the twelve several pearls; there, too, is the tree of life, with its twelve manners of fruits. Who shall ever tell forth all the meaning of the symbols used by holy men to set forth the Paradise of God?

Nor are the Scriptures our only source of information, for our sighs below are prophecies of the blessings laid up for us. The toil-worn labourer thinks of heaven as a land of rest, and he shall find it so. On the other hand, the relish that we have for religious worship, and the delight we take in Christian work, leads us to think of heaven as a sanctuary where the servants of God can serve him day and night: we shall find it so. For my part, I sympathize with both expectations; for though they sound contrary, they need not clash. The rest of glorified spirits, so far from being a sort of suspended animation, will rather consist of a joyous refreshment in enthusiastic service; and the ministry of ransomed hosts, instead of wearying them, will arouse them to fly more swiftly, to sing more loudly, and to serve God more diligently as they see his face. Are there not tempted ones among you who smile as they think that there shall be no sin in heaven? To Paul, when in prison, knowing that the hour of his departure was at hand, after a life of preaching the word and enduring persecution, the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge should give him was just then the most welcome anticipation. As the warriors look for a crown, so on the other hand friends look for communion. To loving hearts great is the bliss of heaven's unbroken fellowship of saints: it will indeed be a great joy in heaven to see all who loved the Lord below. How happy we shall be when these blessed reunions take place. Still, I think that all of you will agree with me that the heaven of heaven is that we shall be "with Christ, which is far better"—that we shall behold his face and partake of his glory. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be the centre of our delights. To have reached home in the heavenly Father's house, to have seen our Elder-brother, and to be sure that we shall abide with him and go no more out: oh, that is what we pant for! We long to hear his voice welcoming us to our new abode.

"Come in, thou blessèd, sit by me;
With my own life I ransomed thee;
Come, taste my perfect favour:
Come in, thou happy spirit, come;
Thou now shalt dwell with me at home;
Ye blissful mansions, make him room,
For he must stay for ever."

Beloved, our song will be to him who loved us; and yet we shall want to tell out to others our love to him. You cannot wash his feet with your tears, because he will wipe all your tears away; you cannot honour him with your substance there as you can here, for there will be no widows and orphans whom you can relieve, no poor and needy ones whom you can feed and clothe and visit, doing to his disciples as you would do unto him. But oh, to fall before him, and then to gaze upon him! He looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still. Oh, for a sight of him! One said, "See Naples and die." But oh, if we could only see Christ, even on earth for a minute, we would be content to die

and go home with him straightway ; nor ask leave first to go and bid them farewell which are at our house.

What hallowed communion with him we shall there enjoy. In his church below he has given us some pleasant foretaste of his sweet converse ; but there the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall always feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water. There is a text that I have been turning over in my mind for many years. I want to preach from it, but I cannot understand it clearly enough at present. I hope to preach from it one day before I go to heaven. If not, I will preach from it up there when I shall have realized its full significance. Ah ! do not smile. Some opportunities we shall have in heaven to testify of Christ ; for we shall make known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. It is difficult to imagine that we ever can be able to explore the whole of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The passage I am referring to is that in which Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Like Thomas, I am prone to ask questions. What is there to be prepared, and in what respect does heaven as a place need to be made ready ? I do not like to think of heaven as a half-built habitation, or as fully built, yet only partly furnished. What means this preparing of a place for us ? Perhaps our Lord's going there made heaven ready, and its mansions meet for the occupation of his disciples. Heaven would hardly be a home for saints in the absence of the Saviour. As I do not know the angels, and never was acquainted with any one of them, I doubt very much whether I should feel at home in their company if Jesus were not there too. There are a few saints up yonder whom I once knew and dearly loved. But one wants to be introduced to the whole of the residents, to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. How can this happy familiarity be brought about ? Now that Jesus is there we have a friend on high whom we have known, and who has known us, who can introduce us to all its inhabitants and acquaint us with all its joys. His presence is the light and the glory of the celestial city. My place will be prepared when I am safe in his arms, leaning on his gentle breast. There may be much work for the builder before all the plans and purposes of the eternal Architect are completed. Of that I do not know : of that, therefore, I cannot speak. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for his people ; and we very distinctly perceive that he is preparing his people for the place.

Listen ye now ; lend me your ears, and hearken to this concluding word that I have to say to you. Heavenward now we are hastening our steps. We long to reach the happy plains, because there is not only a rest to be enjoyed, but a festival to be celebrated. The marriage-supper of the Lamb draweth nigh. His church shall be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. We that are with him, following in his train, called, chosen, and faithful, are only espoused to him as yet, but we are going to that place where the voice shall be heard, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." I halt. I dare not advance a step farther. I bring you to the margin of this blessed ocean of infinite delight. Oh, for a plunge into it—into the Godhead's deepest sea of love. Is there a more intimate relation into which our Lord Jesus

Christ shall hereafter take his beloved people whereby we shall be forever united to him? Shall we know the fulness of his love in a communion of which it were not lawful for a man to speak? Was this one of the unspeakable words which Paul heard when he was caught up into Paradise? Can it be that this marriage scene is the last act of the new creation, as it was of the old creation, when the Lord God found and formed a helpmeet for Adam? "This is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Till the day break and the shadows flee away, let us wait for the Bridegroom's appearing, and the home-bringing of the bride. As virgins that look forward to the marriage day let us keep our lamps trimmed, and see to it that there is oil in our vessels, lest when the cry is heard, "The Bridegroom cometh" any of us should need to nurse the dimly-burning spark, or despairingly cry, "Our lamps are gone out." Let us all be ready that we may go in through the gates into the city.

Some of you, alas! are not able to feel the joy which this subject excites in our breasts. You cannot take delight in the throne of God and of the Lamb. God grant you may. Come, now, to the throne of grace with open confession and secret contrition. It is the throne of God, who knows the nature of your sin; it is the throne of the Lamb, who bore the penalty of sin, and can put it away. Come to the throne of the Lamb that was slain. I entreat you to come now. So shall you find peace and reconciliation, and you shall be made meet to enter into the joy of your Lord. I pray God to bless this whole congregation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—337, 877, 373.
