

GLORY UNSPEAKABLE

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning July 24th, 1859

By Mister JAMES WELLS

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

Volume 1 Number 33

“The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” 1 Peter 1:11

THE Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to suffer, and he did suffer many things, he suffered everything that was needful for the salvation of our souls, for the confirmation of God's truth, and for God's eternal glory. His love therefore, in this respect has been put to the test, and it has proved its reality; that many waters could not quench it, nor could floods drown it. And those who are his must also be put to the test; they must be brought to know that truth which the world hates, and despises, and turns its back upon: which the world ever has persecuted; for it is impossible but that offences will come; but woe to that man by whom the offence comes. Therefore, we must be put to the test as to whether we can endure tribulation for the truth's sake; and then, says Peter, “The God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Then, when brought into this establishment of the truth, we can understand a little of the apostle's reckoning when he says, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” It is of this glory that we have this morning to speak; the glory that should follow the sufferings of Christ personally and also relatively; for the words will stand good in both respects; that as glory should follow his personal sufferings, so shall glory follow the sufferings of his people. But you can say that of no other people; you can say that of no other order of things. How poor is the honor, how dull is the glory, and how miserable and uncertain are the advantages that result from the ten thousand sufferings of this world to attain worldly fame and worldly objects; but here there is no uncertainty, here there will be no dissatisfaction; here every one will be satisfied with the reward.

I can give you this morning, the Lord enabling me, only a very poor sample of the glory that follows the sufferings of Christ, in comparison of what that glory really is; but in order that you may see what I am somewhat aiming at, I will take three words as expressive of that path in which I wish to travel; *resurrection, ascension and exaltation.*

First: First, then, RESURRECTION. That was the first glory, at least we will speak of it as such, that followed the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are clear upon this one thing,

that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the ground of what he had done, on the ground of the work that he had perfected. And there is something else in connection with this equally clear: and that is that the people of God are regenerated and preserved, and will at the last great day be raised to eternal glory, on precisely the same ground; there is no difference whatever; that as their works formed no part of the ground of his resurrection to glory, so their works will form no part of the ground of their resurrection to glory; but it will be entirely on the ground of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. Hence the apostle, after enlarging, as he so beautifully does, upon the ten thousand advantages of the atonement of the dear Savior all through his epistle to the Hebrews, sums up the whole in these beautiful words; "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" I think that is one of the most sublime verses in all the New Testament; "Now the God of peace;" here is peace, peace by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; "That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep," that had laid down his life for the sheep, that had thus redeemed the sheep; and that he was raised from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. And the apostle would give us to understand that if we would love God rightly if we would believe in him rightly, if we would serve him acceptably, if we would be accepted of him; he gives us to understand that it must be in this way; for he goes on to say, "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever;" showing that whatever is contrary to that peace which is made by the Lord Jesus Christ is not acceptable to God; and that whatever is not in accordance with that pastoral responsibility, or accountability, if you prefer that word, and which perhaps is rather the preferable word of the two, that whatever is not in accordance with the accountability of the Great Shepherd of the sheep (for he stands accountable for the sheep, hence, his own words, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring;) whatever does not stand in accordance with the peace that he made, and his pastoral accountability; whatever does not stand in accordance with God's everlasting covenant in Christ, and with the blood of that everlasting covenant, cannot be acceptable in his sight. Taking this view then of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, that his resurrection was entirely on the ground of what he himself had done, what he himself had suffered, what he himself had achieved, and that we are hereby raised up, we have here a part of the glory that followed from his sufferings. And there is no relation in which he rose in which his people are not one with him. You will find in searching the scriptures, that his people are set forth in sweet oneness with him in whatever character he is spoken of. If for instance in his resurrection he is spoken of as the rising Star, the bright and the morning Star; the night of sin being passed away forever, the night of penal death being passed away forever, the night of the law's vindictive curse passed away forever! the night of the powers of darkness with the dear Savior passed away forever; and he is the Bright and Morning Star; that is one of the characters in which the Savior appears. We have nothing to do but come to the holy scriptures, and we have this beautiful scripture upon the subject, "When all the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." It is there spoken of in the past tense, but it has a future meaning; that the people of God shall rise as stars from all the darkness of sin, all the darkness of death, and all the darkness of delusion; rise by oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ; he is the Morning Star, and they are the morning stars to sing together, they are the sons of God to shout for joy. Again, in his resurrection he is the Rising Sun, with healing in his wings. The disciples were mourning for him; deep were the wounds, no doubt, that his crucifixion, though as yet they did not clearly understand it, made in their minds, deep were the wounds, no doubt, made in their minds even when the Savior spoke to them of departing from them. "Sorrow

has filled your hearts,” were his words to them. And Peter even denied the Lord altogether. But when Jesus rose from the dead, how did he rise upon them? With healing in his wings. “Peace be unto you.” “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” He healed all their wounds, and made them all happy. Is this your religion, my hearer? Can anything short of a sight of Jesus make you happy? can anything short of the manifestation of Jesus make you happy? If nothing short of this can make you happy, and you are seeking after this, and come this morning seeking after this, what do the scripture say concerning you? “*Fear you not*, for I know that you seek Jesus.” There is nothing without him. Did he then rise as the Sun of Righteousness? have the people of God any relation to him here? Yes. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father; let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.” Oh then, what glory is there in oneness with Christ. If then I would serve God acceptably, it must be by the resurrection of Christ; if I would shine as one of the morning stars, it must be by Jesus Christ, by being conformed to his image; if I would shine forth as the sun, I must be arrayed in the Son of Righteousness, arrayed in the righteousness of Christ; clothed as the church is represented, with the sun, shining forth as the brightness of the firmament forever. Then again, expressive of freshness, he is spoken of as the Rose of Sharon. Is the church anywhere compared to a rose? I think the word rose is mentioned only twice in the Scriptures once in relation to Christ, and once in relation to the church. That beautiful flower is named only twice to my recollection throughout the Bible, Christ rose from the dead then as the Rose of Sharon, “Peace be unto you, peace be unto you.” Oh, what a fragrance, what a preciousness there was there. Has the Church any relation to him here? Here is the poor sinner, a solitary desert. Ah, he says, I am nothing but a thorn, I am nothing but a brier; I am nothing but a bramble; I am nothing but a desert, a solitary thing; and I shall be lost. Notice carefully the word of God upon this subject. “The wilderness” ah, say you, that’s just what I am; “the solitary place;” that’s just what I am; “shall rejoice and be glad.” What! can a poor solitary thing such as I am rejoice? Go back to the latter part of Isaiah 33; and there you will find this declaration; “The inhabitant”, that is, the inhabitant of the new Jerusalem; “shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” These tidings of pardoned sin are to reach this wilderness; to reach this poor solitary one, to reach this poor outcast, desert one; for the 34th of Isaiah is a parenthetical chapter lying between the 33rd and the 35th; take away the 34th, and then bring the latter part of the 33rd up to the beginning of the 35th, and you will get an explanation then of the 1st verse of the 35th chapter. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.” Now the nominative of this pronoun has been difficult for some to find; but you must set the 34th chapter aside, and remember that the pronoun (them) refers to the closing of the 33rd chapter, where you find the tidings of pardoning mercy and healing mercy. “The inhabitant shall not say I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” Now then, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” The Rose of Sharon was cut down; men being dead in sin recognized not its fragrance; but it rose from the dead in all its freshness and fragrance. And so, these shall blossom as the rose, that is, be like Christ; shall savor of Christ; they shall partake of the fragrance of Christ; and “It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing;” likeness to Christ again. Again, did the Savior rise from the dead, in dear and sure relationship to God? Adam stood in the garden of Eden as a son of God, but he defiled that sonship, he forfeited all the rights and advantages of that sonship; but Jesus Christ did no sin, therefore, he rose from the dead, in all the rights and advantages of sonship. Israel after the flesh, they were God’s sons in a conditional covenant; but they lost all to which, as the sons of God they were entitled. But Christ lost nothing, because he did no sin! He went in perfect accordance in life and death with what was

written of him; and therefore, having lost nothing, he rose in the same relationship in which he died, and his people are one with him in this. And the Savior's very heart and soul seemed on fire to make this very matter known, that I am now dwelling upon. When Mary would have detained him perhaps, as heretofore, to wash his feet with her tears, perhaps to have told him a thousand experiences of her soul, perhaps to have adored him there for hours, before she let him go; he said, "Touch me not," meaning, as I apprehend, do not hinder me, "For I am not yet ascended." I have but little time to stay on earth, do not hinder me, but go to my brethren, go to my disciples, and tell them that I ascend to my Father and your Father" go and tell them that God is as much their Father, as he is my Father, go and tell them that dissolution in this relationship is impossible, go and tell them that they are my brethren still, that I am their Elder Brother still; "That I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" go and tell them that as long as he is my God, he will be their God. And can we doubt, friends, for a moment, that the Father will be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to all eternity? Have we any suspicion for a moment, that he will not be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ to all eternity? Will not the time come when the Savior will (not by surrender, but by presentation,) deliver the kingdom up to the Father, that God may be all in all? And then also shall the Son be subject unto the Father; he shall feed the Father's flocks again, so that he shall remain the Son, God shall remain the Father, he shall remain the Shepherd and God shall remain his God to all eternity. So much then, for the resurrection of the Savior.

Second: I come secondly to THE ASCENSION of the Savior This is another part of the glory that should follow. Let us look for a moment at this wonderful subject as set before us in the Scriptures. As I observed on Friday evening, his ascension lined the path with blood all the way to God's throne. In the 16th of Leviticus there was the sacrifice slain; the sacrifice was for the sinful, the sacrifice was for the guilty, the sacrifice was for the filthy, the sacrifice was for the wretched and the miserable; but who at the same time had confidence in God by the sacrifice. Then the priest was to take the blood, so that you might follow where the priest went; and it was to be sprinkled seven times before the mercy seat; to denote perfection; and then he was to go still further, and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat; first, here is the sacrifice; then the blood taken into the holy place, and sprinkled before the mercy-seat; then sprinkled on the mercy-seat; and that is where God is. How beautifully it opens up that Scripture, "You, who were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ." It is a beautiful representation. The apostle takes this as a type of Christ's ascension into heaven; for he says, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Oh then, bring me to the sacrifice, then I may go on. David describes this beautifully, "Send out your light and your truth;" your light to show me the sacrifice, and your truth to show me the order of it. We want information; we want not only light to see the sacrifice, but we want truth to describe to us the order of that sacrifice, the design of that sacrifice, the glory of that sacrifice. "O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto your holy hill, and to your tabernacles, then will I go unto the altar of God." There is the sacrifice. Will you go on further, David? will you venture on further? Yes; he well understood the mystic, the glorious meaning of the priest entering into the holiest of all, and sprinkling the blood seven times before the mercy seat, and seven times on the mercy seat David understood it well; therefore, he said, "Then will I go unto the altar of God;" I will not stop there, but I will "go unto God, my exceeding joy." The ascension of Christ then, brings us representatively into the presence of God. He has gone to appear in the presence of God for us. And I hardly dare stop here to tell you all the different respects in which the Lord Jesus Christ represents his people. First, he represents them personally. The priest

was a man that was to be physically perfect, as a type of the spiritual and moral perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ; so that he represents us in the perfection of his own person. And secondly, the priest was to represent the people in the perfection of the atonement. So, Christ represents us in the perfection of his atonement. Third, the priest was to represent the people by the breastplate. There were not two of the precious stones in the breastplate alike; they were all precious, but they all differed; and yet they were united; they were all at right angles one with the other; they never quarreled; a very beautiful representation of the people of God in their varied experiences. You have some of you your dark experience, darker than others; others have more light experience; there is a great variety; but still with all this variety there is nevertheless harmony; there is harmony in diversity, and diversity in harmony; and all will come perfectly right at last. So that he represents us in the perfection of his person, in the perfection of his atonement, in our variety of experiences.

Again, let us hear what the Savior says about his ASCENSION, and the glory that should follow, "In my Father's house are many dwellings;" our version renders it "mansions" meaning variety of adaptation and plenty of room; "If it were not so, I would have told you; I go and prepare a place for you." And just as the high priest, after he had been into the holy of holies, and sprinkled the blood on the mercy-seat, returned to the people, and received them by blessing them, pronounced upon them the seven-fold blessing; so, says the Savior, I will come again, and receive you into all the blessedness of my ascension, into all the blessedness of my priesthood. How beautifully the apostle in the 9th of Hebrews enlarges upon Christ's ascension; he there brings before us the glory of God in the most enchanting, spiritualizing, reviving, and refreshing way. I never feel weary of dwelling upon these things. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood;" by his own blood. Who was he? God; God equal with the Father; "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood;" the blood of Christ is the blood of God. He offered what? His own blood. What a triumphant scene must that world be where everything is regulated according to the worth and value of the blood of the God-man Mediator. "Having," before he entered, "obtained eternal redemption for us." The glory of his ascension; giving us access to God and obtaining redemption for us. The apostle reasons upon this; he places between eternal redemption and our possession of glory, between these two he places our preparation for the glory, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot?" What a Scripture! Oh, am I then to appear at the last as spotless as Christ? Yes. As spotless as his blood can make me? Yes. There are some things that I am afraid to say; I was going to say that if a spot could be found in one of his redeemed people, the dishonor would belong not to the man in whom the spot was found, but to that Savior who came to take every spot and blemish away. I know such an expression ought to be used with great care, lest we should border upon irreverence; but it is a blessed truth that he offered himself without spot to God; and herein will be his eternal honor, herein will be the eternal honor of the Holy Spirit, who has testified of this; herein will be the eternal honor of the Father in having found the ransom, Christ. "How much more" says the apostle, "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works?" Ah, all the time you are under the law, your works are dead; the law puts a negative upon them all; but now, if you are brought under the gospel, and your conscience by the blood of Christ purged from dead works, then your works are living works. Prayer is a work, it is a living work; then you have living love, enmity cannot kill it; living praise, living standing out for the truth, living works; whereas the religion of Jesus Christ has delivered us from the first Adam, and delivered us from the law, and delivered us from

the broken covenant; so that “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” There is the glory of Christ’s ascension, then; in his making a way of access to God, representing us before God, assuring us at the same time that he will come again and receive us to himself.

Third: Then, the third, and that will be as far as I can reach this morning, is that of EXALTATION. The Scriptures are very beautiful upon this too; and so, they are upon everything in these matters “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” Now the word of God tells us clearly that the people of God are named after Christ; and if he has a name above every name that is named, and they are named after him, then they must have a name that is above every name that is named; and I hope that will satisfy you. Ah, say you, it will, if I can find that it belongs to me. In the world that now is, there is no name that is like the name of Jesus; “There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” Is there anything in the word of God, then, that makes the church one with him in this? Yes, plenty of Scriptures; I will mention one or two. The Lord has undertaken to make us ashamed of our old name; to make us conscious of it; that will make us ashamed of it; and when he has made us conscious of our old name, then we begin to prize the exaltation of Christ; “Exalted to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins;” exalted that he may be merciful to us, exalted that he may be gracious to us. “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.” When will that be? I will tell you presently. “You shall no more be termed forsaken.” Ah, let a sinner be brought to feel that he is forsaken in the first Adam, forsaken in God’s law; forsaken in his heart; that God has left him; that he must die in his sins, and be damned to eternity; that he cannot help himself; that no angel can help him; “For unto the angels has he not put in subjection the world to come,” That will make the sinner look about him: Ah, am I in that state? I always thought I might hope in God, but now I see I have been deluded. I always thought I might say the Lord’s prayer in relation to myself, “Our Father;” but I have been deluded. I am not born of God. Ah, now the righteousness of Jesus Christ will begin to have a brightness in your estimation; now the salvation of God will begin to be like a lamp that burns. Ah, say you, I begin to see the way of escape. “You shall no more be termed forsaken; neither shall your land any more be desolate.” Ah, there is another evil; we find that out afterwards. A man finds first that he is without God; and he says, I will soon make myself holy, or at least holier; I will soon make myself righteous, or at least more righteous; I will soon make myself good, or at least better; and I should think when I have done this, God will do the rest. But you will find with which you would clothe yourselves, will be but filthy rags; all your holiness with which you would array yourself will be but as the morning cloud and the early dew, it will pass away and leave you desolate; and you will say, ah, what shall I do? I am forsaken and desolate beyond description; what is to be done? Then comes in Christ’s righteousness; ah, that would bring me to God; God’s salvation; ah, that would save me. “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness; and all kings your glory: and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.” Christ has acquired a new name, that no one knows but himself; that is, no one knows the pleasure that he has in the work he has wrought; on which account it is said, it is a name that no man but himself knows; none but himself knows it in experience. None can tell the gladness of Christ’s heart at what he has done; he never once did a thing that he had to be sorry for; “You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.” Well, what is this new name? Why, the new name is a name of infinite and eternal delight that

God has in your soul; the new name is a name of eternal pleasure. “You shall be called Hephzibah; and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.” The church therefore, has a name expressive of God’s eternal delight in her by Christ Jesus; expressive of that eternal plenty she had by Christ Jesus. Lastly, in his exaltation he takes his bride up with him to oneness with himself. He has a name which is above every name that is named; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, “Jehovah, our Righteousness.” And this name is not an unmeaning thing; it means that her existence is identified with his; that her dignity and glory are identified with his; it means in a word that she can never die while this Almighty Savior lives.