

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

NATIONAL WORLDS.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 2ND, 1866, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

* Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Matthew xxiv. 29.

First, *what is meant by the sun, and moon, and stars*; I shall then, secondly, as this has a national meaning, *contrast the kingdom of Jesus Christ with the kingdoms set before us*; and then in the third place, if time permit, set before you *the way in which the Jewish government was obscured*. There are two ideas in the obscuration of their government; first by the sin of man, and secondly by the just judgment of God. But before so doing, I have just to remind you that this strong language *does not refer, as many persons suppose it to refer, to the final consummation of all things*. I may just remind you, that in ancient times, and indeed to this day in the east, kings are called by very pompous titles; they are called the sun, and the bright and morning star, and the light of heaven, and the soul of the world; so that this kind of language would not at all mislead the minds of the ancients: they were accustomed to describe their governments by sun, moon, and stars; and consequently the perversion of these governments, keeping up the same kind of language, was spoken of as being the subversion or obscuration of the sun, and moon, and stars; whereas the sun, and moon, and stars literally are not here intended. And should I be favoured, it is my intention, if I can, when we have had another sermon or two upon this subject, to have a sermon or two upon the ultimate end of the world; I shall then, with all humility, as it will become me, offer my opinion upon the final destruction of all things. Some people suppose that the time will come when the whole universal creation of the great God will be destroyed; but when persons so speak, little do they think of the countless millions of worlds that roll around us; and that myriads of those worlds are far, very far superior to our own, and that have no recognisable connection with our own world. We must not speak of the infinite doings of the great God, even in creation, as though all his doings came within the range of our comprehension: the great business of the Bible is to shew us the way to heaven. the great business of the Bible is the eternal salvation of our souls; and that this earth with its heavens will be destroyed is a truth; but the countless millions of worlds that roll around us, they will come under another question upon that point; but that I waive for the present. First then, you will observe it is customary in the Scriptures to speak of the overthrow of nations under the imagery that we have in our text; and the reason I dwell for a few moments upon this is because of the instructiveness of such a mode of speech. Now you find a great deal in the Scriptures of the language of universality; but, my hearer, ever remember that when you meet with language of apparent universality, that language is universal in its meaning only to the extent of the subject to which it belongs.

Hence, when Augustus Cæsar sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed, "all the world" there meant all that part of the earth over which he reigned; it meant the whole Roman Empire, because that was all his world. You have there, then, universal language limited in its meaning by the extent of the Roman Empire. Now you will find, nations are called worlds; each nation by itself is called a world. And when you read the words "whole world," "all the world," and apply it to the universe, or even to the world universally, you will in most cases be wrong. Some instances will come before us in the first part of our subject. Take for instance, Isaiah xiii. where the prophet is describing the total overthrow of Babylon; Babylon in that chapter is called a world. "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity." Now the word world, there meant simply the Babylonian empire; and the prophet in speaking of the subversion of that empire uses these words; "The stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine; I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place." But did the circumstances that took place in the total destruction of Babylon affect the literal sun, or the moon, or the stars, or our globe? Not a whit, because it does not refer to that. You observe, therefore, that the constellations there mean the rulers, the government altogether; that is the meaning of the prophet, that is what the people would understand; and you see that is fulfilled; the national heavens, that is to say, the government and constitution of Babylon, are all passed away; her sun is gone down to rise no more; her stars, her rulers, are all obscured to shine no more; her heaven, her towering prosperity and importance are passed into eternal silence in the dust; and the earth, that is the Babylonish empire, is moved out of its place; and now universal silence reigns; destruction upon destruction came, until it was completed. And we shall see presently how beautifully, how delightfully, the dear Saviour's kingdom stands in eternal contrast to these kingdoms that were destroyed. In the 13th of Isaiah, the sun, and moon, and stars, and constellations of heaven there mean the subversion of the Babylonish Empire; that judgment accomplished, that world is gone, there is an end of that world, and it is ended for ever; the Lord has assured us that world shall rise from the dead no more. Again, in Isaiah xxxiv., the prophet is describing the destruction of Idumea, that is a name for Edom; now mark the sublime language which he uses; he says, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." But when Edom was destroyed, did the stars of heaven literally fall? were the hosts of heaven literally dissolved, and were the heavens rolled together as a scroll? But did that take place? No, it did not, as to the literal and material heavens; but it did as to the Edomite heavens, their national heavens, their king, their rulers, their government, their rock-like standing; for their position by nature was exceedingly strong; the rock of Edom; and they boasted in their strength; but though they were thus up to heaven, they were to be brought down as unto hell; and thus then all their hosts were dissolved, and all their rulers and shining powers fell like a leaf from the vine, or like a falling fig from the fig tree. Now that Edom in that same chapter is called the world; the Lord there declared he would bathe his sword in heaven; not in the literal heaven, but in Edom's heaven, in their government; that his sword of justice and

judgment should enter into the Edomite government, and should overturn it. Here then, this same nation is in that chapter called a world; and the word world there means simply that nation. How many instances there are, of the language of universality employed that have only a limited meaning, limited by the subject to which the language belongs. Whenever you meet with language which is special, or if the language be universal, be careful to find out the subject to which the language belongs; then the universality of it is limited by that to which it is limited. "God so loved the world;" that is an universal phrase, but cannot mean those whom God loves; it means the people whom God loves, the Israelites had obscured their government in a way I shall describe when I come to that part, Jeremiah looked at the destruction of their nation; he saw that Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonish power, who was appointed to destroy their nation; now let us hear the prophet's description of it. Jeremiah iv., "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void." Now what earth does that mean? Simply the Jewish earth, the Jewish world, it had no form; and the heavens, and they had no light;" that could not mean the literal heavens; the sun rose, and the sun went down; and the stars ran their majestic rounds, without being at all dimmed; yet, said Jeremiah, "and the heavens and they had no light." And what does this mean? It means the obscuration of the institutions and laws of that dispensation; those laws and institutions were set aside; and those laws and institutions were their heavens, that gave them spiritual light, that gave them the light of God, and by them the presence of God; but all these were set aside; and so the earth was without form; that is, without that organization which it originally had. God organized them after a certain order as his people; but they broke in upon that organization, broke it up, and organized or rather disorganized themselves after their own order. Then the earth had no form, and was void; was void of the truth of God; and any place that is void of God's truth, is void; for God's truth and grace always went together, and always will; grace never does anything without truth, and truth never does any work without grace; they always go together. I am aware a man may take up the truth without having grace; but I mean where the Lord works; where he does any work, his truth is the test to know whether it be his work or not. The prophet thus saw, then, the nation disorganized and fitted to destruction; he thus saw that the heavenly institutions were all obscured. And then mark, he says, "I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled;" the mountains of course meant the different courts of the law, to which courts they resorted, in order to enjoy and to maintain their rights; and these Jeremiah calls "mountains;" and these mountains trembled; there was something the matter with the foundation; "and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man;" no good man, no godly man, no man to stand out for the truth; "and all the birds of the heavens were fled." And who were the birds of the heavens? Why, those who saw that destruction would come, and that believed in the Lord's prophets, and fell in with Nebuchadnezzar, and went to Babylon before the destruction came; Daniel and his companions, and all of them that believed in the Lord's prophets; they saw that these institutional heavens were obscured; "there was no everything was disorganized; they saw the destruction; "there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled." Thus then, friends,

from what I have said, though I have more to say yet upon this subject, you will clearly see that this sublime language is applied to the subversion of nations; the terms sun, moon, and stars, used in the rhetorical, but not in the literal sense. Now before I come round to my text I have another, and one that I want to be more careful upon, and that is the mystic Babylon. In Rev. xvi. there is the mystic Babylon; let us see if we can understand it. You read in that chapter of the mystic Babylon; and that mystic Babylon has its earth, has its sea, its rivers, its sun, its throne and its atmosphere. John saw the vials of God's wrath poured out upon this mystic world. Take it literally if you can, you make no sense of it; but take it spiritually, figuratively, and mystically, you understand it all. "The first angel poured out his vial upon the earth;" the earth signifies the territorial extent of the beast; and the Roman Catholic priests now boast of that which, if God were to open their blind eyes, they would be ashamed of. They boast now of having under their awful system two hundred millions of the human race; who are now held in darkness, trammels, and fatal delusion by that accursed system. Of course they glory in thus having under their power two hundred millions of the human race. I say, if the Lord were to open the eyes of these priests, and to give them to see what they are as sinners, their real condition, they would shudder at that in which they now glory; like Saul of Tarsus, after grace had taken hold of their hearts these men would look back and see themselves to have been nothing but blasphemers, and injurious, and enemies to their own souls, and enemies to God, all the time they were thinking they were the holiest people in the world, the most righteous in the world, and that they belonged to the only people that God loved, would ever own, save bless, or receive; so great would be the difference. Thus then the angel pours his vial upon the earth; for where sin is, there the judgment of God must be. The earth, therefore, will mean her territorial extent. Then observe that that same world, the mystic Babylon, has also its sea. "The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea." I am not now seeking to handle these matters historically, or even to point out what the vials do; my object now is to shew the sense in which such language is employed, in order that we may have a clear view of those things we have to attend to. Now what does her sea mean here? The sea is the source of rain, as well as rivers; and the instructions taught by any system are compared to rain. Hence the truth; "My doctrine shall drop as the rain." The sea, therefore, is the source of her instruction, and the source is a vast collection of tradition and law which the Roman Catholic Church has gathered together; hence the thousands, and thousands, and thousands of volumes in the Vatican, that form an ocean of human tradition that it would take an antediluvian lifetime for any one man to go through. Well now, the angel pouring out his vial upon that sea, that source of false doctrine, means that God will curse those false doctrines in time, and the whole shall be burnt up. Then third that mystic world has also its rivers; that will mean its intercommunication, or what they would call its means of grace; that is, their ordinances, ministrations, and the angel poured his vial upon these; and so God will curse their services by and bye. "Who hath required this at your hands?" Men may think themselves perfectly right in the way in which they serve God as they imagine; but there is only one way in which God can be served acceptably; so that their very service must by and bye be cursed.

Again, that system has its sun; the sun means its government; "the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun;" and so by and bye the Popish government must be overturned; it is not the overthrow of its temporalities that will overthrow its ecclesiastics; the Pope is as firmly seated now as he ever was, ecclesiastically; not certainly politically and temporally, but he is ecclesiastically; so that the vial is not yet poured out upon the sun; that system still remains in its organized form; and still that system, in the estimation of two hundred millions of the human race—the system of Popery—as an organized system, is their sun; it shines upon them, they bask in it, they glory in it, they comfort themselves in it, the people enjoy it, and the devil works hard to make them enjoy it, he being transformed into an angel of light. But the time will come when that very organized system in which they bask now will be a curse to them; for when the angel shall pour out his vial upon the sun, it will scorch men; their very organized system shall come down upon them, and make such demands upon them it will drive them almost mad; and they will then curse the Pope, and curse Popery, and curse the whole of it; and if grace lay hold of them they will run away from it, and be glad to be brought under a government where they have eternal life, and that is in Christ Jesus. Again, that system has its throne, its throne of grace. "The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast;" that is upon the throne. Now the Pope's throne is the Roman Catholic's throne of grace; if I can get the benediction of the Pope, the sanction of the Pope, the blessing of the Pope; it is their throne of grace; why his holiness is Christ's vicar, and vicar means one instead of another; Christ is gone to heaven, and left the Pope in his place, that is the idea of the Roman Catholics; and consequently the Pope's throne is the Roman Catholic's throne of grace. If I can approach that throne, says the Catholic, and obtain the blessing of the Pope I shall do. Now the angel shall pour out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and that will make everything dreadfully dark; for then his kingdom shall be full of darkness. And so, when the throne of grace is destroyed, the Catholic looks around and says, the throne of grace is gone, there is no throne now, there is no power, no authority, no centre of unity; it is all gone. And if God should open the poor man's eyes, when that time shall come, he will then see that he has been approaching a throne of iniquity all this time and thought it was a throne of grace; and now, his eyes being opened, he will see that the only throne of grace for a poor sinner is that throne that is in heaven, is that mercy seat where mercy reigns, where God's presence is enjoyed, where his name is glorified. Again, that mystic world has its special source of fertility; the great river Euphrates. "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water therefore was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared." Let us try to understand this. Do I take the river Euphrates literally? By no means whatever. Do I take the drying up of the waters literally? No. Do I take the kings of the East literally? No! I take the whole of it mystically; and if you have three grains of common sense in your heads and one grain of grace in your hearts, there is not one of you but will understand what I am going to say when I do say it. The river Euphrates ran through the very centre of ancient Babylon, the city and the empire, and was a source, by its eastern and western irrigation, of fertility to that country, to that empire, to Babylon; and literal Babylon is a type of the mystical Babylon. When Cyrus took Babylon, he turned the river aside;

and as far as the city of Babylon was concerned, dried it up, and by that means took possession of the city. And so the source of the Roman Catholic church shall by and bye be dried up; men shall cease to subscribe their silver and gold to it; the time will come when you will not find one Irishman so far lost to common sense as to attempt to go to Italy, or any where else, to help the Pope. No! the source of its supply shall be dried up, and it shall all become as poor as poverty itself; and then the priests must work like honest men; and if they make a Pope, he must work for his living, that will be the result. And when this Popery is dried up, what will it do? It will make a way for the kings of the East. I do not take the East there locally, I take it mystically. Kings are representatives of kingdoms; and the meaning is this, that when this Popery is dried up, these kingdoms shall come under what is promised in the first part of Isaiah 60th: when Popery is dried up, its source gone, then comes the great command unto the kingdoms, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Darkness shall cover the earth," the territorial earth of this Babylon; "But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." These are the prospects we have before us; the time will come when the territorial possessions of Popery will be cursed; the time will come when her ocean of human tradition shall be turned into blood, and become too deadly for any man to drink thereof; the time shall come when her rivers, her means of grace as she calls them, shall be turned into blood also, and no man shall drink thereof; the time shall come when her organised sun shall set to rise no more; the time shall come when her hypocritical throne of grace, which is nothing but a throne of iniquity, shall be taken away, and the kingdom shall be full of darkness. Thus, my hearers, as you take one part mystically, you must take the other part mystically; you must take it all in accordance one part with the other. Then mystic Babylon has also its atmosphere; it is spoken of as a world, you see. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air;" so that Popery became so bad and poisonous nobody could breathe it. "And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne." I was going to say I should like to be on earth then; for when the seventh trumpet does begin to sound; (you know I don't hold with the assumptions of many that have written upon it; still these things are true notwithstanding men's misunderstanding of them;) glorious shall be the scene. Ah, when the seventh angel poured his vial into the atmosphere of Popery, and it became so poisonous nobody could breathe it, "there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done." That will be a solemn time for the enemy, but a glorious time for the friends, for then will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ; and as the ancient literal Babylon was destroyed to rise no more, so Popery shall be gone and gone for ever. And if you ask how all this is to be brought about, the answer is very simple, and in entire accordance with all I have this morning said; the answer is this, that this man of sin shall be consumed by the spirit of the Saviour's mouth, and by the brightness of his coming; not his personal, but his mystic coming. What is the spirit of his mouth? The gospel; the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. And what is the brightness of his coming? The brightness of the revelation of Christ as the object infinitely brighter than any other object. Has not the Lord so favoured us? Did not the Lord consume our darkness somewhat, and

is not Jesus the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person? Is there any light, any perfection, any glory, so bright as the Lord Jesus Christ?

Now our text refers, then, in the same kind of rhetorical language, that is, figurative language, to the subversion, the ultimate subversion of the Jewish nation. That nation, as a nation, will be wanted no more for ever. We no more want a typical Aaron; we no more want a typical David; we no more want a typical sacrifice; we no more want a typical temple; we no more want a typical land; we no more want a typical city. Men are labouring hard by their books to build up this old dispensation, and say it will return by and bye. What for? My good man, the Anti-type of all came 1800 years ago: he was the anti-typical Priest, and he remains for ever; he is the anti-typical King, and Sacrifice, and everything, and he remains for ever; and by him we have the anti-typical land, incorruptible, undefiled; by him we have the anti-typical city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; by him we have the presence of the Lord for ever and for ever.

II.—Now let me hastily in conclusion, CONTRAST the kingdom of Jesus Christ with these kingdoms. We have seen the Babylonian world, with its sun and stars, pass away; we have seen the Edomitish world, with its sun and stars, pass away; we have seen, or rather we shall see in the course of this subject, the Jewish world, with its sun and stars, pass away. We see in Revelation 16th, the mystic Babylon; and I am sure we see it in the world; there is the Roman Catholic hierarchy before our eyes; can we deny its existence? There it is; there is its description in Revelation 16th, in its several departments, with that destruction that shall surely come in the Lord's own time, for strong is the Lord that judgeth her. But when we look to another kingdom, how different things appear then, so different. I should like, only my eight pages would not allow me, I should like to begin with the Saviour's kingdom, where I ought to begin; and you will find that his kingdom in the beginning of it accords with the end of it, and that the end of it accords with the beginning of it. Would you go to the 33rd of Deuteronomy and have just a word there? Would you go from there to the 30th of Isaiah, and from thence to the 60th of Isaiah, and from thence to the last of Malachi? I must just refer to these four. 33rd of Deuteronomy; "the precious fruits brought by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon; and the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills." What is this? Though this refer to Joseph literally, yet ultimately it refers to Christ; he is that Sun of Righteousness that has brought all the promises to perfection; he is that Sun of Righteousness that ripens by his power, for the very rays of this Sun are the rays of redemption, the rays of justification, the rays of grace, and love, and mercy; this Sun, while it has ripened all the promises of God's word into perfection, it ripens our souls into perfection, preparing the promises for us, and preparing us for the promises; and while the promises are yea and amen, he will present us at the last great day in all that perfection into which by his death he hath brought us relatively, and by the manifestation of him to our souls he will bring us personally; so that we shall find ourselves perfect by his perfection, righteous by his righteousness, victorious by his victory, and glorious by his glory. These are the chief things of the ancient mountains, these the precious things of the lasting hills. Again, of the kingdom of Christ it is said in the 30th of Isaiah, in direct contrast to the kingdoms of this world, whose sun and moon, and stars, must go down, must terminate;

of the kingdom of Christ it is said, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; that of course is a mode of speech to denote that increase of light that the people of Christ in his kingdom shall enjoy, while the others must come to darkness; all their prospects and hopes must be darkened; but here, in the kingdom of Christ, the light shall increase unto the perfect day; "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days;" in which the literal creation was brought to perfection; "in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound;" that means first at Calvary's cross; secondly it means in experimental reconciliation in our souls to God; and third it means at the resurrection, at the last great day; when this last shall take place, then will he have bound up in every sense of the word the breach of his people which sin hath made, and have healed the stroke of their wound; for the breach to be made no more for ever, for them to be wounded no more for ever; but they shall dwell among the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills, and rejoice in the presence of God. And Isaiah takes up the same subject again, for it is a subject which he seems very deeply interested in, in his his 60th chapter; there he says, "Thy sun shall no more go down." What do you think of that? Here is a kingdom of plenty, a kingdom of perfection, a kingdom of eternity; "thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light," hesh all reign, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended;" in contrast to the mourning of the others, which will never be ended; those who are not born of God, and brought into Christ's kingdom, must mourn for ever; but those that are brought into Christ's kingdom, the days of their mourning shall be ended. "Thy people shall be all righteous:" they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." See the contrast then, between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world; see the contrast between the kingdoms that shall become as chaff of the summer threshing floor and that kingdom that ruleth over all, and is eternal as God himself. Then in the last chapter of Malachi, Christ is presented to us as the King; and to indicate the kind of government his is, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise;" mark the distinction—"the Sun of righteousness;"—all other governments put things wrong, do wrong, and are wrong, and come to naught, but he shall be the Sun of righteousness; wherever there is wrong he has put right; he has put away sin, swallowed up death, brought in life and immortality; he is the Sun of righteousness, and his people is righteous by him; he is righteous, they are righteous, God is righteous, the kingdom is righteous; no sin there, no famine, no death, no evil nor adversary occurrent; what a glorious kingdom is the kingdom of Christ. Again, "with healing in his wings;" all other governments inflict wounds upon their kingdoms, they wound as tyrants have done; plenty of instances of that before you; they have driven the people to desperation; and such tyrants become overturned, and we rejoice in their downfall. But the kingdom of Christ is healing; he does not oppress, he does not wound; at least if he does it is for our good; he healeth us again; he does not rob, he does not deprive, he does not bring us into bondage, but he brings us into freedom; yea, calls us his brethren; his heart is not lifted up above his brethren. This is the government that shall be for ever; this is the person that shall reign for ever; "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."