

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

ALL THE LAND.

## A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 10TH, 1861, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

'And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.' Revelation xiv. 20.

SOME think that ministers never ought to meddle with such scriptures as these, and they think so because they hardly ever seem to profit by what is said upon such scriptures as these. But then we must remember that it is written that all scripture is not only given by inspiration of God, and is profitable; there is no part of the Bible that is really barren. And I do not think, therefore, if some parts which relate to our eternal welfare appear so ambiguous, that that is a reason why we should pay no attention to them, but rather a reason that we should pray with one of old, 'Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;' meaning the law of truth. And I must just assure you, before I enter upon the latter part of our subject, that if you think a feeling of curiosity, or mere pastime, or mere trifling, has led me to these words, never was judgment more misled. I trust I feel too much the weight and solemnity of my position to occupy our precious moments in mere speculation. I have to take up two main parts; the first is *the measurement*, one thousand six hundred furlongs; and the second is *the company of the Saviour*, which is indicated by the horse bridles, implying the presence of horses, that is, mystic horses, in connection with this wondrous victory.

I. First, then, we have to notice the MEASUREMENT. I noticed last Lord's-day morning that perhaps some of the friends would send to me and give me their opinion of this. I did that, I confess, partly from a little curiosity, but it was serious curiosity. And one friend has sent and reminded me that Mr Meade thinks that this measurement refers to the length of the Roman States, Peter's Patrimony, as it is called—the Pope wearing to this day a triple crown, as expressive of his possession of those three states. I happen to be aware this is a view that some men take of the measurement, and I will not despise that idea, because many of these symbols have a kind of triple meaning; some of these symbols will bear a political, an ecclesiastical, and also a spiritual interpretation; and when they are put to these three different tests, the political or historical, relative to nations connected with the people of God, ecclesiastical in relation to the ecclesiastical tyrannies that have existed, that have been exercised, the symbols will also stand that test; and when put to that which is spiritual, they will also stand that test. So that it does appear to me that the great deficiency of most writers upon this book is in tying the symbols down to one idea, as though the Word of God was capable in what it says of conveying in its symbols and similes only one view, whereas most

parts of the Word of God are like the wheels of Ezekiel, full of eyes, and look every way; so that when we have taken one aspect we may then take another, and then another. Another of our friends has sent to me that the measurement here means the perfection of the Saviour's victory, that it reaches to the uttermost vessel of mercy—shall reach to them all. Well, I thought, that's it; that is not exactly the way I shall come to it; but that is really it, and will really prove to be so, when we put it to the test. Before I enter upon the subject I must just say, that I was very pleased yesterday by a little present I received in a letter, and very pleased with the letter, and very pleased to find that one so young as fourteen years of age was in this place brought savingly to know the truth. I must confess my mind was very much affected, and I felt a union of soul to that child, though I know not who it is; but I do bless the Lord for every sign and every symptom of his saving power among us, for this is the object we have in view, to gather up our fellow mortals into a saving knowledge of these eternal things. So that, altogether, these things are very pleasing. I will pass by several find-fault letters I have received, for they are so weak in comparison of the others—the others seem to carry the sway, and were, at any rate, (if not numerically) in weight, they were in the majority, and so the minority must be neuter, and I will say nothing of the find-fault ones, as I am receiving plenty of them generally; and unhappily, through my weakness, the find-fault ones are sometimes in the majority, but this week they happen to be in the minority, and I insist upon it, as a matter of order, that that minority must be quiet; and so I rejoice in a majority on the side of that which is good.

I will now then notice that you are aware, of course, that a furlong is the eighth part of a mile—and consequently a thousand furlongs will be a hundred and twenty-five miles; six hundred furlongs will be seventy-five miles; put these two together, you get two hundred miles. Now I suppose there is no topographical writer that would make the length of the land of Canaan much more or much less than two hundred miles. I think it is pretty evident then that the thousand and six hundred furlongs are intended to set before us the length of the promised land. Thus then, if we apply this measurement spiritually to the victory of Christ, which I shall this morning do, we shall see its meaning, but when I come to take, as I must hereafter do another view of the text, then, I shall apply this measurement altogether in another way. Now then, taking this two hundred miles, or these sixteen hundred furlongs—and the question is open to you all: you can all easily ascertain the length of that land which the Lord promised to his people, this two hundred miles:—then this victory in its extent conveys two ideas; first that the Saviour gives his people all the land of promise; and then secondly, taking a metonymical view, which we very often find in the Bible: that is the container mentioned, but the contained meant: so here taking the second idea as it extends to the whole promised land, to give them the whole promised land; now it extends, to all the vessels of mercy. First, then, a word as to the land of promise. Now you are aware that when the Israelites were brought into the land of Canaan, they, through giving way to the other gods, intermarrying with the heathen, and various causes, they never did possess, at least not for any length of time, the full land of promise; they were always coming short, always apostatizing—and through that tendency to backslide, for they were bent upon backsliding, and went back from the true God over to the false gods; the consequence was, they not only came short of the promised land, but as we see, they ultimately lost the whole of it. Their victory through their apostacy fell short—but when we come to David's greater son, when we come to our spiritual Joshua, when we come to our spiritual David, when we come to the Captain of our salvation, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, here we have set before us the whole of the promised

land; there is no coming short now, the Lord, as a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst. Now relative to our eternal welfare, relative to the ultimate inheritance which the Lord has promised, point out if you can one foe which stood in the way of our possession of that kingdom which the Saviour has not entirely conquered, and we shall see presently, when I come to that part, what he is at the end of these victories. I say, point out one foe if you can which the Saviour has not entirely conquered. Do you speak of your sin that stood in the way? Why, he hath destroyed it, he hath conquered it, and the sin of the people of God has no more power to appear before God against them than Samson's dead lion had power to roar against him after that he was dead; the lion roared against Sampson while it was alive, so sin unatoned for, sin in its unatoned state, or a sinner under the law, before he is acquainted with what Christ has done, his sin then as a roaring lion threatens his destruction: but when brought to see that Jesus hath conquered it, taken the life out of it, that it is destroyed, that it is gone, and that this which so stood in our way of freedom he hath entirely conquered, the warfare is accomplished, and then by that accomplished warfare, the mercy of God rolls in to us in the shape of forgiveness; our iniquity is pardoned. And then it takes another form: you see there is a three-fold form of the Lord's mercy to poor sinners there in the scripture to which I have just referred; the warfare is accomplished; and then comes mercy, in and by that warfare, iniquity is pardoned; then comes the double, 'she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' Then again Satan with all his wiles, he also is conquered. View Satan as the author especially of error—view him as an angel of light—view him in the vast variety of ways in which he deceives mortal men, yet the Word of God assures us he shall not deceive God's elect. That is a remarkable thing, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect. What a wonderfully instructive doctrine is that of eternal election. When a sinner is brought down into the dust of humiliation before God, and asks, how can I be interested in Christ, how can the Lord love me, how can the Lord have mercy upon me, how can I hope to see his face with joy, how can I, the vilest of them all, hope to escape the wrath to come? And presently the great truth is revealed to such an one that those who are saved were chosen before the world was, and that that election is an election of grace; such an one will say, Well then, if that be the order of things, if the Lord loved because he would, and if he chose because he would, if that be the ground upon which the Saviour ministers eternal life—and he hath said so; 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;' ah then, I will cleave to this. When once this gospel is thus revealed to a poor sinner, he cleaves to it: ah, he says, here is the victory. I see here this victory reaches the whole length, the whole extent of the promised land; I see the promise is yea and amen; I see that every foe is conquered; I see that sin and error are laid in an everlasting sleep, and they can never rise again. 'The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see no more for ever.'

Then again tribulation: tribulation hath made us rebel, at least it has made me. I look back with shame to myself for those murmurings, and infidelities, and misjudgments of which I have been the subject under various circumstances through which I have come; but what have those tribulations done? They have lowered me, I confess, in my own eyes; they have made me appear vile in my own estimation—they have made me abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes; they have laid me very low in the dust, they have made me stand amazed at the long suffering and mercy of the blessed God; they have made me think very highly of that Saviour that could lay down a life of infinite value for a worthless worm like me; and they have made me cling very close to that grace which alone can save me, and to that victory which alone is

complete. Ah, this is not what Satan designed; he wanted our tribulations to cause us to apostatize, to cause us to hate God, to get us to curse God. Yes, Lord, just touch Job's property, just touch his person, he will curse thee to thy face; the original word there conveys the idea of repudiating, turning away, and giving up, and apostatizing—and that is the meaning of Satan, that Job will give up his religion, he will give up his God, he will give up all those doctrines, he will give up his hope. Just touch him in his property, and touch him in his person, and he will give the whole up. But then in order that it should be proved that grace was stronger than tribulation, great as that tribulation was, it was needful that Job should be favoured to go safe through it, in order to prove the devil to be a liar, and to prove God to be true; and so it was that all that he endured could not break down that perfection that Job had in Christ; it could not break down that integrity which the Holy Ghost had rooted in his heart; it could not destroy that godly fear which the Lord had placed before his eyes, it could not destroy that faith which he had in the Lord: so far from destroying it, it brought it ultimately into wondrous exercise, and enabled him to say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Here then, is a victory that gives us possession, that removes every impediment out of the way, sin, and death, and Satan, and terror, and troubles, as I observed last Lord's-day morning; so that there is no coming short of any part of the promised land. Now in the first Adam all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God but in Jesus Christ there is no coming short. There the apostle says, 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left,' you observe the word *us* is in italics, it is not in the original—and it would read thus, 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left,' there is a promise left, 'of entering into his rest; any of you should seem to come short of it.' Now the man that comes short in his experience and consequently in his faith, is in a fair way to come short of heaven itself.

Perhaps you will say, what do you mean by coming short in experience. Why, if you are not sinner enough, if you are not poor enough, if you are not helpless enough, if you are not needy enough to feel your need of the completeness of this victory, this victory in its extent, then your experience is deficient. I am more, ten times more concerned in some respects about your downward experience than I am about your upward experience. I like to see the people well tried; I like myself to see a sinner broken down, and made to feel his helplessness; and then such an one will not come short of his faith. When the victory of Christ is presented in the order of it, such one will say, 'That is it; that is it.' I see there that if Jesus Christ has conquered everything, then I can see the inheritance is safe, then I can see the freedom is entire, then I can see the gospel is sure, I can see the beauty of those declarations which relate to the immutability of the everlasting God.

After these few remarks I will now notice what is said of the Saviour in this victory, or in what form he appears at the end of this victory; because every word of the Lord is pure, and has its meaning. You observe that the Saviour in maintaining this victory is set forth as having going out of his mouth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite nations; and he shall smite them with a rod of iron. Now this sharp sword we know to mean his word. 'the word of the Lord is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.' And it is a mercy to be smitten with this sword. He shall smite the nations. Ah, when the word of the Lord smites a man, and enters into his very soul, dividing asunder soul and spirit, entering into the joints and marrow, is a discernor of the heart, and lays open that man's condition in the way the apostle describes; he says, 'When the law entered, sin revived, and I died.' It was laid open to Saul himself the concupiscences of his heart: why, he says in the 13th chapter of my being before God a righteous man, a holy man, and a good man, though he should say, why, if I search the creation round I cannot find a

more like a devil than I am, instead of being like God. He of course had no idea that this was his real condition. This is what I understand by the Saviour thus smiting the nations. Then he shall rule them with a rod of iron, I understand that to mean mercy also; he shall break them to pieces as a potter's vessel. And is it not so? I look back at the time when I worked thoroughly hard; and what I am going to say now I am not going to lay down as a rule for others to go by; but when I could not carry my resolutions out, and keep my thoughts, and words, and acts, in entire accordance with the demands of my conscience, and what I thought was right—what was the result? Why, I almost swore at the Almighty; yea, I had some of the most awful oaths in my mind against him; and so far from bettering it, I made it ten times worse; I cursed my very existence, and I know that my heart cursed God; I know it did. I hated God, I hated religion. What, say you, so bad as that? Yes. What did you do then? I could not get away from it. What was this? This was the rod of iron breaking me to pieces; this was the rod of iron of the law bringing me down; as fast as I began to build up a little holiness, a little righteousness, the law came like a rod of iron, and broke it all to pieces; and thus I became a poor broken vessel, a poor helpless creature, beaten all to pieces. This is the way the Saviour deals with his people. And then when he has thus brought them down, when he seeth there is no strength, then he will repent himself concerning his servants, change his dealings, and deal gently with them. This perhaps may be rather digressive; but the point I am aiming at is this:—now it is said of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelations xix at the end of his victory, that he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written—King of kings, and Lord of lords.

He did no sin; that I apprehend to be the meaning; he set out as King of kings and Lord of lords, and he ended as King of kings and Lord of Lords; so that when he came to the end and looked back, he had lost nothing; there he was as holy, as righteous, as sound as ever, as incorruptible as ever. And so to indicate the same, at the end of the victory which he wrought, on his vesture—I take the vesture there to be a symbol of character;—he hath on his vesture a name written; not a stain upon his character; his reputation unblemished; the Lamb without spot, or blemish, or any such thing. You cannot say the same of any other person that ever lived; for there is not a just man, never was and never will be upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. But this wonderful Person is the same at the end as he was in the beginning. And remember, his perfection of character was not for himself, because it refers to his practical character there; not merely to his abstract character as God man, but to his practical character; there is a perfection of practical character; and it is in that perfection that we are to appear. I know from the word of God, as well as from observation, that it is the lot of some to be in bondage through the fear of death all their days; but I am sure where that is the case there is no clear revelation of the perfection of Christ's practical character, that righteousness being imputed to us. Why, my hearers, we have nothing to fear, except we are afraid of God's love, that that will hurt us; except we are afraid of God's mercy; except we are afraid of God's boundless compassion; except we are afraid of his tenderness who hath said, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye;' except we are afraid of the perfection that is in Christ; except we are afraid that the Spirit of God will hurt us: except we are afraid that God's everlasting love to us will do us some harm; there is nothing to fear. It was this apprehension of things of which I am now speaking that made good old Simeon so willing to depart in peace; for he had seen God's salvation. Then mark, this perfection or this dignity was written not only on his vesture, but it was also written on his thigh. Now the thigh was the place of the sword, where

the warrior carried his sword ; and therefore its being written there denotes the infallibility of the sword ; the sword can never fail. And so the sword of God's word shall never fail ; God will use his word, and will cut down every sinner by the sword of his truth that he intends to cut down. One of old saw this, and was led to pray, ' Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty ; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of meekness, and truth, and righteousness.' So that here at the last shall Satan come forward and proclaim to the universe that the Saviour's sword has failed ? Ah, says Satan, I have got hold of that man ; and the Saviour cut at me with his sword, but he could not beat me off, and he could not deliver that man ; and I have one at last in hell whom Jesus Christ intended to take to heaven. This may do for you free willers, for you duty faith men, who tell us there are thousands in hell that ought to have been in heaven. Such is the way in which they speak of this mighty Person ; if so, then he has failed somewhere. But no ; he still goes forth conquering and to conquer ; and he knows when to smite, and where to smite, and who to smite ; his sword has never failed. Thus then here is a perfection of conquest ; and we see what the Saviour is at the end of the conquest.

II. I now come to the COMPANIONS of the Saviour, implied by the horses—the riders on those horses are witnesses for Christ ; and, secondly, I shall shew that they are co-workers with him. Well, but what is their business ? Why, to go forth and to bear the tidings of this wondrous victory to earth's remotest bounds, and down to the end of time. But we must get some keys to unlock this ; get some light somewhere to shine upon this. Zechariah describes the difference between what we are in the Lord's absence and what we are by his presence, thus : ' The Lord of Hosts hath visited his flock,' poor timid things, ' the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.' Now, in the Lord's absence, we are poor timid things ; but when the Lord visiteth us, then we are like Job's war horse, we can defy anything and everything, care naught for anything. Hence said one of old in the manifestation of the Lord's presence unto him, ' I will not fear though ten thousand set themselves against me ;' that is, in the Lord's presence. That is one little ray to help us to the meaning of our text. Secondly, the church, in Solomon's Song, is compared to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. I confess I cannot clearly get at what that means ; the simile is not a customary one with us ; it is Oriental, and ancient, and somewhat out of use in common parlance, and that makes many of these similes difficult for us to understand ; still there are many ideas arising from that simile worthy of the Christian's attention. The first is that of royal property ; Pharaoh's chariot denotes royal property. So the people of God are royal property. Secondly, it denotes costliness ; the horses were, no doubt, very costly, and so the Lord's people are very costly ; they are bought with a price, such a richly caparisoned, may refer to those graces that adorn the church and distinguish her from the world. Now, ministers of the gospel being set for the defence of the gospel, they are, by an Oriental and ancient mode of speech, called ' chariots and the horsemen thereof.' Hence said Elisha to Elijah, ' My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.' Elijah was set for the defence of the gospel, and he did instrumentally defend it ; Elijah was set for the liberty of the people of God in contrast to that thralldom, and idolatry, and degradation into which they were brought by Baal's prophets, and he is therefore spoken of under that simile, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

Now with these views I think we may pretty well get at the meaning of our text. I come to the 1st of Zechariah, and I find the very subject of my text there handled ; I go to the 6th chapter, and I again find the same subject.

handled. In the 1st chapter the prophet says, 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom.' We know this man was Christ; that is, this man upon the red horse; he is in that same chapter called an angel, and being called an angel, we know who he was, and he is there spoken of as riding upon a red horse. It was night: the prophet saw Christ there in his humiliation, in the centre of his conflict; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.' And these horses most writers tell us, mean political and ecclesiastical powers; well, they may bear that interpretation, but do not let us confine it to one idea; if we take it spiritually, it stands out as clear as possible. Now these are represented as being with the Lord Jesus Christ: going forth with him. And when the prophet saw these, he said, 'O my lord, what are these? And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.' Does not this accord with something like these words: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' Did not the apostles go forth majestically: if the horse denotes strength, did not the apostles go forth with mighty strength; and was not the victory that Christ had wrought their theme wherever they went, and did they not see Satan falling like lightning before them, and were not the victories God wrought by them truly wonderful? Then these persons are represented as witnesses, and they come and give in their testimony: 'Behold all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest;' that was a true testimony, but it was a bad one, it was an evil report. If you go to the Book of Haggai, you will find there what is meant by all the earth sitting still and at rest. There is the house of the Lord, who cares for it? there is the service of the Lord, who cares for it? no one. They were all quiet; and although they sowed much, and brought in little; although they ate much, and had not enough; though they drank, and were not filled with drink; though they clothed themselves, and were not warm; though they earned wages to put into a bag with holes; they were quite at rest as regarded the house of the Lord; it is not convenient yet to build the house of the Lord, the time is not yet come. Now the Lord sent these witnesses, and they stirred up the mind of the people to build the house of the Lord. They were at rest. And I have often thought that reproach belongs to a great many of the people of God in our day. 'All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.' I am sure we are always best off when the Lord stirs us up and keeps us moving.

Now, then, these horses represent the people of God in that strength they have in oneness with the Lord; represent the people of God, and ministers of God especially, in sweet association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then in the 6th of Zechariah you have the same subject; there you have the ministers of God co-workers with the Lord, and you have the place whence they come, and the nature of their work, and the climax of their work: 'I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.' What are these four chariots but the same thing with Ezekiel's four living creatures. It is a sort of custom of Zechariah to illustrate the desolation of the people by being destroyed on all four sides—the cardinal points: hence the four horns that dispersed Judah and Jerusalem; in contrast to this, there are four carpenters or four builders, to defend Jerusalem; so that, as they had been destroyed on every side, now they should be protected on every side. I am fully aware that men generally take the four chariots to mean the four empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; most writers make these four empires swallow up everything; whereas these empires are nothing but mere cow-relatives; the gospel is the theme of the Bible, and the children of God are the main objects which the books of the Bible have in view; and the others would not be named at all were it not for their connection with the church

in some form or other. I take the chariots and horses, then, to indicate the ministers of the gospel; and these two mountains of brass, conveying the idea of stability, I take to mean the law and the gospel, both of which are firm. And these chariots came out from between these two mountains; and so the man that is sent of God must come from between these two mountains. He knows the stability of God's eternal law, that not one jot nor tittle can fail, and he knows that none but Jesus Christ can meet that law; and, on the other hand, he is equally well established in the stability of the gospel, not one word thereof can ever fall to the ground or pass away.

As to the different colours of the horses, I will not stop to enlarge upon them, but merely notice that when the prophet asked what they were, what was the answer? 'These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth;' they are his servants, working together with him.

Now as our time is gone, I may just notice the climax of the whole. You will see there is a beautiful analogy between the close of the ministry of these chariots in the 6th of Zechariah and the close of the Saviour's victory in the 19th of Revelation; and the close of their ministry accords with the whole range of scripture upon the same point. The black horses go toward the north; and the white go after them, and the grised (men of various shades as it were of gifts) go toward the south country; 'and the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth, ministers of the gospel will seek to preach the gospel where they can. Then he cried unto me, and spake unto me, saying, 'Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country. The historical meaning is of course the delivering of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity; the spiritual meaning is this—I take the north to mean the law and the black horse to symbolize, humiliation; woe, and everything that is solemn. And so the man that knows something of the northern blasts of God's law, he is broken down; he comes down into humiliation, pleads a Saviour's name; and when he gets hold of that name, God's Spirit is quieted; God's Spirit will be quieted by nothing but what Christ has wrought; and the conscience, if we are taught of God, will be satisfied with nothing short of the victory he has wrought. And these ministers bring the tidings of what Christ has done—and that quiets the Spirit of the Lord. The law has nothing more to say; the law will never say a word to you: no, for it is magnified, honoured and established by the righteousness of Christ. Thus then the victory which the Saviour hath wrought, is a complete victory, and his people are represented in him. I do hope and pray the Lord may lead us to understand these symbols and these mysteries more clearly; for they all have a tendency to entwine our thoughts and affections with those eternal things wherein lieth our everlasting portion.

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