

THE RIGHT PLANTATION

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning October 13th, 1861

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 3 Number 147

“So will I watch over them to build, and to plant, says the Lord.”
Jeremiah 31:28

HAVING noticed the former part of this verse last Lord’s day morning, together with the stability of that building of which the Lord himself is the author, we have this morning to notice especially the last clause, or rather the clause wherein the Lord promises to plant. And in so doing, I will first notice *the Lord Jesus Christ, as planted in his humiliation*; and then, secondly, *in his exaltation*; and then, thirdly, I will try and describe *how the Lord savingly plants a soul into eternal and sure oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ*. And this matter, like all, these matters, you see at once to be important, vitally so. Hence, in Matthew 15:13 we have these solemn and decisive words, that “Every plant which my Heavenly Father has not planted shall he rooted up.” Now we well know that he did plant Jesus Christ, and we well know that Jesus Christ has ripened into eternal perfection, and we know that his people shall flourish and ripen by him into the same eternal perfection.

But I notice then, first, *the plantation of Jesus Christ*. The Lord Jesus Christ, when he was planted in the way I will presently describe, he is spoken of as being the heavens planted. Hence the Lord, in the 51st of Isaiah, says to the Church, “I have put my words in your mouth;” that is, the Church of old was blessed with the knowledge of the new covenant, doctrines, words, promises, and precepts of eternal salvation; “and I have covered you in the shadow of my hand.” He took care of the Church until the time should come that he should accomplish what he there promises: “that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, You are my people.” So that, when Jesus Christ was planted, the heavens were planted; a heaven here was planted, that is, a state of grace while we are here, a state of heavenly grace, a state of heavenly hope, a state of heavenly fellowship with God, was planted when Christ was planted for us, while we are in this world. And then the heaven that is to come, eternal glorification, also was planted when he was planted. And thus the Lord planted the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, The earth there cannot mean this earth literally, because that had been all created thousands of years; it must therefore mean another earth, a new earth; another land, a land of promise; and the foundations of the earth to come, or the world to come, for the word earth there would mean world, the world to come, the foundations of the world to come, were the incarnation of Christ, and the life of Christ,

and the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ, and the ascension of Christ, and the government of Christ; these were the foundations. Examine them; you will find they all accord with the great truth declared, that "his mercy endures forever." Christ's incarnation, that is, the oneness of divinity with humanity, can never give way; his righteousness is a foundation that will never give way; his death is a foundation that will never give way; his resurrection is a foundation that will never give way, for he dies no more; his ascension is a foundation, connecting heaven with earth and earth with heaven, that will never give way; his government is a foundation that will never give way, "That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth." So that all the produce of the world to come, of this eternal world, will be in accordance with these foundations, which God has laid. But the chief point that I wish to notice is that set before us by Isaiah, where it is said, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." Now let us see if we can understand this; "a root out of a dry ground." Here is the Lord Jesus Christ in his humiliation. Now this dry ground I take, in the first place, to be the Jewish Church; and Christ certainly was planted there, born in Bethlehem. And what shall we understand by that Church being dry ground? In the first place, its priesthood had become dry ground; they had, in the first place, perverted that priesthood; in the next place, that priesthood was wanted no more, so that Jesus Christ was planted where that priesthood died, where there was a priesthood that waxed old, that vanished away, and is no more; he rose from this dry ground, yet he himself has established a priesthood that will never pass away. Ah! how sweet the thought that he is indeed that great High Priest, who is a Priest after the power of an endless life. Such was Christ in his humiliation, and such he became; so that he, in or by his one offering, took the place of the many offerings under the law; and now the sweet truth that will bear repeating to all eternity, that "he has perfected by his one offering forever them that are sanctified." And, secondly, their royalty was a dead ground. They had lost their dominion; their royalty was dead. And yet Jesus Christ was to have the throne of David; he was to have, the kingdom of David; not the literal throne, not the literal kingdom, but the antitypical throne. So that the Lord Jesus Christ as King, doing no sin, he never did any sin, and by virtue of his doing no sin, and by virtue also of the righteousness he brought in, and by virtue also of the victory that he has wrought, he has right to reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be, no end. Thus, out of this dead priesthood, rose by Jesus Christ a priesthood that lives forever, retains its freshness and blessedness, forever; out of this dead royalty arose a King that is a King forever, and of whom the Lord thus speaks, that his crown shall flourish, so that in his kingdom there will be eternal plenty, And then, third, the dry ground means also the absence of right. The Israelites had lost their right to the land; they had apostatized from God and had lost their right to that land which the Lord had given them. But the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and he has established a right to everlasting rest, he has established a right to everlasting joy, he has established a right to the presence of God, and that forever. Here, then, out of this dry ground, Christ arose; he was a root thus out of this dry ground; and as he has established this right, and if you are a believer thus in Jesus Christ, if you know your need of him as the Priest, and the King, and the Son of God, having established, this right, his right can never be invalidated. There is something, I think, very beautiful in this, that God the Father should so order our inheritance, that our right thereto could never be invalidated; that the Lord Jesus Christ should so live, and so die, and so rise from the dead, as to prolong his days, as to see his seed, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands; that our right stands good. Our sin has forfeited every right we had in the first Adam, and every right we have, as far as life is concerned; but sin cannot touch our right there, it is a right that is founded in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. And thus, then, my

hearer, here is a beautiful substitution; here is a priesthood by which we have access to God and peace with God; here is a royalty by which we are made kings unto God; and here is a right by which we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, secondly, he was not only out of the dry ground of the Jewish Church, but he was also planted in God's law that is dry ground. When I say that, I mean the law of God as a broken law, as a violated law; I mean the law of God as a sin-avenging law, called a fiery law, that it breathes nothing but wrath and indignation against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Now, in this terrible law, in this dry ground, Christ himself was planted; and this fiery ground, this worse than dry ground, this burning ground, must have consumed him, had he not been perfectly holy, and had he not been God as well as man. And now he grows up from under the law. That is a beautiful expression upon this matter in Zechariah, where it is said of Christ, "He shall grow up out of his place." So that you see the Jewish Church's dry ground could afford him no nourishment; so that the nourishment he had was from himself, in himself. And the law could afford him no nourishment: no, there could be no water there to water his roots; the nourishment upon which he lived was by his own personal excellencies. And it is said, "He shall grow up out of his place;" and so he did. He grew up by his obedient life, till He reached the end of the law. The law was his substitutional place, he grew up out of that place; under our sin was his substitutional place, he grew up out of that place; and under the wrath of God was his substitutional place, but by the excellency of what he did he grew up out of that place. And now the Lord Jesus Christ has brought us out of a broken covenant into a covenant that cannot be broken, and he has brought us out of the law into the Gospel. See the mighty change! What a wondrous thing is religion. Talk of nothing to say! Why the further we go the more its wonders appear. If we had been left under the broken covenant, where Christ was planted, there was nothing for us but all the curses recorded in the 28th of Deuteronomy; if we had been left under the law, where he was planted, then there would be nothing for us but eternal indignation. But Jesus Christ comes in, he grows out of the dry ground of the old covenant, and brings us into the new covenant; grows out of the dry ground of a fiery law, and brings us into that Gospel which sets forth and intentionally so, as a contrast to the law. The law of God is spoken of as a lake of fire, as a stream of brimstone which the breath of the Lord does kindle. But in contrast to this, that Gospel into which he has brought us is thus spoken of, that "I beheld, and a river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, and in the midst was the tree of life." So, my hearer, you see it stands in entire contrast to the fiery law of God. "And there shall be no more death, and no more curse; but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it.

Here, then, is the plant of great renown. Must not his delivering us from a broken covenant renown his name forever? Must not his delivering us from the law; and putting the Gospel into the place of the law, renown his name forever? He might well be called the plant of renown. Again, death was a dry ground, in which he was planted. Death works in us all. Death is dry ground; it dries up the hope of man. If a tree, said Job, be cut down, it may through the scent of water sprout again; but when man dies, where is he? His hope is gone, that is, his earthly hope; his earthly endearments are gone, his earthly consolations are dried up. Ah! one who lifted up his eyes in hell, so completely was every particle of consolation dried up with him, that he longed for Lazarus to be sent, that he might dip his finger in water to cool his tongue. Jesus was planted in the dry ground of death, and this dry ground of death, that must dry us all up as far as mortal life is concerned, could not dry him up; no, he was the green tree, he remained the green tree "No man takes my life from me;"

death cannot take my life from me; give my life; and I, by giving my life, take away the sting of death. But can you do that, my hearer? Can man do that? Can mortal man, by dying take away the sting of death? No; man will die and feel the force of the sting of death for ever. But Jesus Christ took away the sting of death when he died. And what has he put into the place of death? Everlasting life. He could live in that dry ground of death, it could not kill him; and he has hereby taken us from death, redeemed us from death. "There shall be no more death." See, then, how the Lord Jesus Christ, as the substitute, has come into all, shall I say our evils and adversities? and has substituted the reverse there for. Fourth, he was planted in this world. This world is dry ground, that is to say, virtually so; for "the earth and the works therein," let men say what they will, my Bible declares in round words, words too clear to be misunderstood, I think, unless people are determined to misunderstand them, that "the earth and the works therein shall be burned up." Yet Christ was planted in this world, and, by what he has done for his people, takes them out of the world, and they are not of the world, even as he is not of the world; and by his being planted in the dry ground of this world, he has made a way thereby for them to be planted in the living ground of a better world. And thus, if you trace these points out, you will see that here is a fivefold substitution. He was planted in the Jewish Church and brings us out of that covenant; here is therefore a new covenant, by what Christ has done, put into the place of the old covenant. Second, here is the Gospel put into the place of the law. Third, here is life put into the place of death. Fourth, here is heaven put into the place of earth. And, fifth and last, eternity put into the place of time. Here is a substitution! To pass over from the old covenant to the new, from the law to the Gospel, from death to life, from earth to heaven, from time to eternity. What a wondrous change has Jesus wrought! And there is a very beautiful idea relative to this in the 10th of Ezekiel, where the prophet exclaims, "O wheel!" That ought to have been rendered, "O revolution!" He saw what these living creatures came from, and what they were brought to; and in contrasting what they were brought from, the dark cloud, the whirlwind, the fiery scene described in the first part of the 1st of Ezekiel, what they were brought from, the prophet, on contrasting what these living creatures were brought from, and what they were brought to, exclaimed, "O revolution!" for that is, properly speaking, the meaning. And when the Israelites entered Canaan, and they were circumcised, and kept the Passover, and did eat of the old corn, and they called it Gilgal, meaning 'revolution,' or 'rolling,' because there the captivity of Egypt was rolled away, they were no longer slaves; and therefore the reproach of your slavery is rolled away, you are no longer foreigners, you are no longer strangers, but are now fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Ah! my hearer, that change that is wrought in your soul, in bringing you to know something of these things, is a much greater change than you imagine; it is a change, the benefits of which you will enjoy through the countless ages of eternity, It is, indeed, a great change.

But, again, let us look at *the Savior in his exaltation*; let us see if we can find a scripture in which he appears as planted in his exaltation. I come to the 17th of Ezekiel, and I find a scripture there very beautifully setting forth the exaltation of Christ and the circumstances connected with that exaltation, relative to the welfare of man. Now, it is a kind of parable, but there is nothing difficult to understand, if you take Jesus Christ with you; but if you attempt to make it out without him, you will find the truth of his words, where he says, "Without me you can do nothing." Now, in the 17th of Ezekiel, you find there that the Lord said that he would "take of the highest branch of the high cedar;" now, of course, the high cedar was the Jewish nation, and the highest branch of the high cedar was the royal house of David; "I will crop off from the top of his twigs, a tender one." We

know who this is. First, here is the high cedar, the Jewish nation, out-topping all other nations, it stood higher than any other nation; and then here is the highest branch, that is, the royal house of David; and then there are the twigs, the offspring of David, the various kings, twenty kings, that reigned after him. Then comes the tender one, the tender-hearted one, the sympathetic one, the holy one, the just one; beautifully distinguished from all the others as “the tender one; and I will plant it upon an high mountain, and eminent:” here is his exaltation. And is it not so? Is he not enthroned on high? He is not planted in dry ground now; ah! no; he has got away from all his trouble, and virtually brought his people away from all theirs too. “I will plant it upon an high mountain, and eminent;” and so Zion out-tops every other mountain; the kingdom of Christ is above every other kingdom, rules over every other kingdom. “In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it.” I think the height of Israel there has some reference, first, to the perfection of Christ’s work; and secondly, to glorification; that when you get to glory, you cannot go higher than that, and you do not want to go higher, because there is fulness of joy, and pleasures unmixed; without, any pain or trouble, and they are to be for evermore. And is not Christ there? Is he not now comforted on every side? Has not the Lord increased his greatness and is it not just as prediction said? How true it is that both in his humiliation and exaltation, he demonstrates the truth of prediction concerning him. And this same plant, it is said of him that he “shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit.” We know what is meant by this, The fruit are unquestionably the promises of God, the leaves are unquestionably the truths of the Gospel; for the leaves are for the healing of the nations, and the fruit are for the delight of the nations. This is the “apple-tree amidst the trees of the wood. I sat down,” said the Church, “under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” And then there is a variation of simile here, it is said, “and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.” How true is this, “fowl of every wing;” it is a beautiful representation. And if you take the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy, upon which I once preached a sermon, upon the subject there, and half offended, some of you did not like so many birds flying about, if you take that chapter, and see what a number of unclean birds there are there, birds of all sorts, little ones, and big ones, and wild ones, and birds of prey, birds of all sorts, and yet these represent the sinners of all sorts that shall be brought to Christ. “Fowl of every wing.” It is a beautiful representation, bless the Lord for it, that any poor sinner, come from where he may, or let him be what he may, if Jesus be the object of attraction, no one that came from that feeling and that motive ever was cast out, or ever will be. See, then, in his exaltation, what an object of attraction he becomes, and that according to his own words, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

But. I will now come down to that which belongs to our personal experience. Now we see that Christ was planted in his humiliation as a substitute; we see he is planted in his exaltation as the center of attraction. Now, the question is, are we one with him? If we are planted, where are we planted? And I wish to be very particular in what I am going to say, and I may just say to you, that it is a remarkable thing, and well worthy of your observation as we go along, that wherever the people of God are spoken of as being planted by the hand of God, it is always in association with free grace doctrines, either typified, or else expressly declared; and the scripture with which I mean to wind up my discourse comes to sum up the whole, and demonstrate the fact, that those who are planted by the hand of the Lord are planted in what I may call free grace ground, where there is neither thistle, nor thorn, nor brier, nor adversary, nor evil occurrent.

This morning, all the scriptures that relate to our plantation by the hand of the Lord, all these scriptures are remarkably free grace scriptures, remarkably high doctrine scriptures, remarkably decisive scriptures. I will now pass by a great many scriptures that crowd themselves around my mind upon this matter, and notice, in the next place, that if we are planted in the place which the Lord has chosen, that, secondly, we are planted also on free grace ground by the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. How clear is Isaiah upon this. My text says, "I will plant;" "so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant." And so, "your people shall be all righteous;" there it is, there is the work of Christ; what is the result? "They shall inherit the land for ever, the work of my hands, the branch of my planting, that I may be glorified." Now, do you not see here that Christ's righteousness, that is, his whole mediatorial work, is the way in which they are planted? so that in order to root you up from your hope in Christ, to take you away from the living waters in Christ, to take you away from your position therein, you must first take the work of Christ away. "Your people shall be all righteous;" they shall be Justified by the completeness that is in Christ; and then, by this completeness, they shall inherit the land for ever, "the branch of my planting, the work of my hands; that I may be glorified." But then, say you, you have said nothing of bearing fruit. Well, I have not; I ought to have done so. Well, then, in the first place, where the sovereignty of God is, there will be a love to that sovereignty, and love includes everything; and, in the next place, if you are planted truly in this free grace land by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, there will be a love to him in that mediatorial work, you will hold it fast. And notice the certainty of it "They shall inherit the land forever." So they are planted, first, by the sovereignty of God; secondly, by the mediatorial work of Christ; third, they are planted by the Gospel of Christ (61st of Isaiah), where the Savior appears in his wondrous mission, "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." Here it is again: first, by his pleasure; second, by the mediatorial work of Christ; and third, by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the way in which they are planted; or, to lay the figure aside for a moment, this is the way in which we are delivered from everything we are as sinners; this is the way in which we have the love of God, the mercy of God, the favor of God, the friendship of God. These are our sweetest seasons, when we can rise above the clouds of mortality thus. I know very well the sin that is within us, the various weaknesses with which we are compassed, and the various perplexities of the way; they form clouds over our minds; and the consequence is, that we are often more at home when the minister is treating chiefly of downward experience; and sometimes, when the minister goes up into these things, he goes up above the clouds. We are not always favored spiritually as the French philosopher was literally, when on a lofty mountain of the Andes, measuring a degree of the meridian, and the clouds were under his feet, and there was a tremendous storm below, the thunders rolling, and the lightnings playing; but they were all under his feet, where he was, the sun was shining calmly and quietly, and the skies clear. But I do not suppose the people in the town below felt much sympathy with him; so that if he had been down there, perhaps he would have done more to encourage the timid ones. Nevertheless, we must get a little above the clouds sometimes. Hence, you often say, Well, our minister was too high for me this morning. Well, perhaps he was; but it shows the possibility of getting above the clouds sometimes, And these are our sweetest seasons, when we can look at the things of time as under our feet, when we can rise into these higher things, sit down in the peace and joy of God's presence, in the sunshine of the Sun of Righteousness, and rejoice that our God rules over all; that there all is light and no darkness, all plenty and no poverty, all peace and no trouble, all assurance and no doubting, no fearing, no trembling, no anything to

make us uncomfortable; for only then it is, when we are caught up into this third heaven, that our souls are happy. Again, this plantation is not only by the good pleasure of God, the mediatorial work of Christ, and the Gospel of Christ, but also by the work of the Holy Spirit. There is a beautiful scripture in a way of contrast upon this in the 17th of Jeremiah, a contrast very instructive. I will quote both sides and leave you to judge on which side you are. Now it says, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man," that is to say, if you are trusting in the things of this world to make you happy; if this world with you be supreme, if you are a mere professor, a sound doctrinal professor, and, on the whole, a sound walking professor, still, at the same time, if this world with you be supreme, and if you would at any time leave the truth of God for the world, but would not leave the world for God's truth, then I will tell you what you are like. You trust in earth, your heart departs from the living God, you make flesh your arm; you shall be like the heath in the desert, you shall not see when good comes; you shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land not inhabited, that is, not inhabited by any living soul. You shall be worthless as the heath, and you shall be cast out into eternal solitude. That must be your portion, if you prefer the world and the things thereof to those glorious realities of the everlasting Gospel. On the other hand, where the work of the Holy Spirit is, "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river;" draws consolation from the various streams of eternal truth, rising from the deeps of eternity; "and shall not see when heat comes;" fire may come and burn the world, but he shall stand unscathed and untouched by it; "but her leaf shall be green," cannot wither that man, his leaf shall always be green; "and shall not be careful in the year of drought;" when every other hope shall pass away, that will not dry his river up, his roots up. Is he on his dying bed? That does not dry his roots, that does not dry his river, that does not wither his leaf; "he shall not be careful in the year of drought;" he has got plenty; "neither shall cease from yielding fruit;" he shall never cease to pray while he lives, he shall never cease to praise God to all eternity, he shall praise the Lord forever. Nine or ten more scriptures I have at my fingers ends now, but I will mention only one more, and then I will close; and that is the 32nd chapter of this same prophet, Jeremiah. Let us look at the free grace again, certainty again, and see how you like it. It stands like this: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good;" God will make everything do you good, all things work together for good; "but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Now notice, plantation comes presently. I am a God of an everlasting covenant, in which I engage not to turn away from you, but in which I have engaged by all means, and at all times, and all places, and forever, to do you good. Is that the God you love? "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This is the covenant God that men do depart from; this is the Gospel that men blasphemously call Antinomianism; this is the Gospel that country parsons and London parsons caution the people against hearing; and yet it is God's Gospel. Again, "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them;" there it is, "in this land," in this covenant land assuredly, "with my whole heart and with my whole soul;" and as I love them as a covenant God, with my whole heart and soul, I will take care they shall love me in the same order of things in which I love them, with their whole heart and soul. "For thus says the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people," in the first Adam, "so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them." Is this the land in which we are dwelling? If this be the land, then we are in the right land, rightly planted. But I am sorry my time is gone, and I must say no more.