

A WORD OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE ENEMIES OF THE GOSPEL

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning April 19th, 1863

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 5 Number 226

“Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” Daniel 11:45

LAST Lord’s day morning, from this verse I took occasion just to notice the historical meaning of this chapter, which I need not now repeat; only just to observe to you that the historical character of this chapter ends with the 43rd verse, and the last verse but one of this chapter commences another subject, a subject which is spiritual and eternal; and so Daniel continues to the end of his book the things which he introduces in the verse preceding that of our text. And hence it is that this last verse but one antedates a great many things that are historically said in the preceding part of the chapter; that is to say, this last verse but one belongs to centuries back in the history spoken of in the preceding part of this chapter. Daniel having taken hold by divine inspiration of the successive kingdoms, and the various operations, military, social, and other operations of the persons connected with the progress of the church of God, when he gets to the end of that he then commences that which is spiritual; and as I have before said, that of course which is spiritual goes far back into the things that are spoken of in the preceding part of the chapter, that must be understood historically.

Now this morning, after what I said last Lord’s day morning, I shall notice, first, *that one event that happens to the righteous and to the wicked*. Secondly, I will notice *the end to which the wicked man shall come*; “There shall be none to help him.” And third, *the end to which the righteous man shall come*. For the enemy spoken of in this chapter is nothing else but the man of sin, that which the apostle calls the man of sin, and does not mean any particular individual, although individuals have sometimes been made by the providence of God conspicuous representations of the systems to which they belong. We shall have a sample or two of this come before us as we go through our discourse this morning.

First, then, *there is an event that happens to the righteous and to the wicked*. What event is that? For one says, “There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrifices, and to him that sacrifices not. As is the good, so is the

sinner; and he that swears," that so unmans himself as to swear and be a swearer, "and he that swears as he that fears an oath." Or, if the word were taken in another way, to him that makes a profession, of religion, and swears allegiance to heaven, and to him that makes no profession at all. One event happens to them all; and what one event is that? I mention this because in that one event the wicked and the righteous are alike. That one event simply is death. "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return," is the sentence of heaven, from which none can escape. Herein, then; it is that the righteous and the wicked are alike. As the one dies, as far as the body is concerned, so the other dies; and as the one comes to his end, as far as the body is concerned, and there is none that can help him, so the other dies. Herein they are one. And indeed, you see it very frequently, too, that the wicked man, he lives longer, does better, and has many more advantages in this life than the righteous. Hence, no doubt, the rich man, he despised Lazarus when Lazarus was living. There was a great difference circumstantially between the two, but they were both one in that event; they both died. And no doubt that the rich man would thus say to himself, Well (for Lazarus, you observe, died first), he would say, Ah! you see, that Lazarus, he was no good after all; you see he is gone before me. Why, if the Lord did not love me, I should not be arrayed in purple and fine linen like this; if the Lord did not love me, I should not fare sumptuously every day like this; if the Lord did not love me, I should not be favored like this. As to that Lazarus, why, he is as bad as that old Abraham. That old Abraham held the doctrine of a sworn and immutable covenant, and that Lazarus holds the same doctrine; and these high-doctrine people generally come to something bad. Just look at him; why, he has not a bit of bread to eat, and desires the very crumbs that fall from my table. He is just like that old Abraham, declaring that God never changes, and holding something about eternal perfection in an eternal priesthood. And thus, Lazarus would become an object of considerable contempt with the rich man. The rich man judged, of course, God's favor toward him by the abundance which he possessed; this is the way in which he deceived himself. Remarkable enough, Lazarus died first. And no doubt the rich man would go about and say to his friends, The beggar is dead, the beggar is dead. Well, have you heard the old beggar is dead? For the Savior says, "And the beggar died." Ah! says the rich man, I am glad enough of it; he will not be a nuisance to me anymore; he is dead, and I have no doubt he has gone to hell. And so he would go about and say, Have you heard the beggar is dead? And he would run to Mr. A, and to Mr. B, and to Mr. C, all through the alphabet, and say, Ah! the beggar is dead; the beggar is dead; he is gone; that high-doctrine beggar is gone; I am glad he is gone, that he is out of the way. So it often happens in this world, the Lord so orders it that he gives the wicked temporal wealth and prosperity, and they then begin to compare themselves with the people of God; they look upon themselves with admiration, gratulate themselves, and despise the people of God. But then comes the record that the rich man also died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, and he saw Lazarus just where Lazarus was not ashamed to be while he was on earth. It was not the first time that Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom. To be in the bosom is to be in the secrets of another; to be in oneness of sentiment and in the affection of another. And so when Lazarus was on earth he was in the secret of Abraham's free-grace religion, he was in the secret of Abraham's covenant God, he was in the secret of that eternal certainty that is by that covenant God. And this is just where the rich man saw him; but he was afar off, he was afar off. And now how the scene is changed! Who is the beggar now? I say, who is the beggar now? Who is the poor man now? Who is the wretched being now? Who is full of sores now? Who is miserable now? Who is cursed now? Who is damned now? Who is despised now?

Here is Lazarus, with his free-grace faith, entered into a fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore; while the rich man lifts up his eyes in hell, and would deem even a drop of water from the tip of the finger of Lazarus, to cool his parched tongue, a comfort to him. This rich unbelieving man was a son of Abraham after the flesh; the poor believing man was a son of Abraham after the spirit. And so, the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise, that have nothing to lean upon but the promise, and nothing to hope in but the promise; the children that flee from the precept, not flee from the precept as to the practice of it, but they do as to any hope in it. The Old Testament saints did not look forward and behold the precepts afar off, but they knew their many shortcomings there, and that they sought the Lord not in the precept, but in the promise. “That you be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit” the precepts?, No, they do not need any precepts there; “that inherit the promises,” the children of the promise; that have already shown they dare not put any confidence in their own preceptive conformity to God’s word, and that their confidence must be in the promise, and that God gave it to Abraham by promise, and that he gives to his people eternal life and eternal salvation by promise. And so, they are the children of promise, and so the promise covers all their shortcomings in the precept, and hereby they stand in the yea and amen promise that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Such was the religion of Lazarus, but such was not the religion of the rich man. Now a gulf is fixed, there is no passing or repassing here. Here, then, the righteous and the wicked, there is one event as the one died, so dies the other.

I notice now *the destiny of the enemy*. And in noticing the end or destiny of the enemy or the wicked man, I shall have occasion in this part, of course, to contrast the two characters. Now it is said of the people of God in this chapter, that when they fall, that is, when they fall into the persecutions which we referred to last Lord’s day morning, and which are described in the preceding verse to that in which those words are quoted, “when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a *little* help.” I do like that; for there’s no child of God helped in trouble all through that trouble, at least very rarely, so much as he could wish to be helped. The Christian would wish to be helped all through his troubles, and under all his troubles, just as Job was at the beginning of his troubles. “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” That is what the Christian desires. Lord, give me grace perfectly to acquiesce in all your dealings, however trying to flesh and blood. How harsh so ever the way, whatever you are pleased to take from me, whatever affliction you are pleased to lay upon me, private, family, personal, relative, church, or worldly trouble, whatever it be, Lord, give me grace to stand still, nor one faint murmur raise; that in these things I may never sin, never rebel, nor charge God foolishly, but be calm amidst tempestuous oceans, knowing that the Lord is nigh, and knowing that the storm will not last always, that the captivity will not continue forever, that this heaviness will continue but for a night, and joy comes in the morning. This is what the Christian desires, and there are times when the Christian is so helped. But still I think it is rather rare than not for a Christian to be helped all through his troubles without sinning or charging God foolishly. It is, therefore, a very significant scripture, “They shall be holpen with a little help.” And so, I have found it when I have been exceedingly tried. Though there are times when I can rise above my little troubles, they are all little that I have ever had in comparison with Job’s troubles, or in comparison, of course, with what the Savior suffered for us; and therefore the heaviest affliction is light in comparison of what Christ endured. There are times when the Lord is pleased to shine upon us, when we can rise above it all, when we can look at all our troubles and say, Well, it is just as it should be; it is the Lord; let him do what seems him good. Well but, says unbelief, it is the devil. But then it is the Lord that permits the devil. Well but, says

unbelief, it is the world. But then it is the Lord that suffers the world. Well but, says unbelief, it is disease. But then it is the Lord permits that disease. Well but, says unbelief, it is something wrong altogether. But then it is the Lord that suffers that wrong; if he is not the immediate author, he sits as refiner, and watches the process of the furnace; and he will take care it shall not go too far for our good. It may go too far for our earthly, fleshly comfort; but it shall not go too far for our good, nor too far for his glory. Now this is what the Christian desires. But what a mercy for us, that when we cannot endure our troubles so passively, the Lord does give us a little help, just to enable us to hold fast the truth! perhaps that is all the help we get. Well, I still believe in the truth; I still believe it is all of grace; I still hold that; but as to my interest in it, I see no sign of it; and as to any enjoyment of it in my soul, it is far from me; and as to being passive, I am like a wild bull in the net; and as to my acquiescing in God's dealings with me, I have worse thoughts of God than I have of my mightiest foe. Oh, these are trying seasons. I am speaking no fancy, I am speaking no mere imagination, when I tell you that I know not anything more distressing to the real Christian than when he is brought into such a state of rebellion as to have the hardest thoughts of God that he possibly can have, and to feel as though he would, as it were, upset all his counsels, and ready to say that God delights in making us miserable, that God delights in making us wretched. Hence said one, "Wherefore hold you me as your enemy?" and as another said, "I am not better than my fathers;" and as another said, "It is good for me to be angry unto death." Well now, said the apostle, realizing these weaknesses in our poor old nature, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him." Well, but then suppose he has been very rebellious; he has been rebelling, and kicking, and cursing the day of his birth, and wishing he had never existed, wishing he was dead, and I don't know what all; such a poor rebellious creature; what is to be done with such a one as that? Well, says the apostle, "if he has committed sins" in this affliction and in this trouble, what is to be done? "they shall be forgiven." "They shall be forgiven" that is what is to be done. God the Father delights to forgive; and Christ delights to forgive; and the Holy Spirit delights to forgive; and the soul shall be delighted in being forgiven. Instead of coming out of the furnace, and boasting how good you have been, you shall come out and boast how good the Lord has been; instead of coming out and saying, We took care to quench the violence of the fire, you shall come out and say, The Son of God has done it all; instead of coming out of the lions' den, and boasting of your holiness and righteousness stopping the mouths of lions, you shall come out rejoicing that the angel of the Lord has done it. So "they shall be holpen with a little help;" just enough to enable you to hold fast the truth, and that is all. "You have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Because," therefore, "you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." You have proved the reality of your religion, for with all your rebellion, you have still held fast the truth. I helped you with a little help; just enough to keep you from apostasy, just enough to keep you from turning a downright enemy to the truth. I helped you with that help; you have kept the word of my patience, and now I will keep you from the hour of temptation, that shall come upon all the world beside. And I think the word kelp there has also a reference to external help. And historically, perhaps, after the first century, the first conspicuous instance we have of a little help of the saints was in the time of Constantine the Great. He overthrew paganism, at least in its externals, and established, or advocated, at any rate, the Christian dispensation. Now Christians were then helped with a little help, and they have been many times since. Though that help that Constantine rendered no doubt helped forward Popery itself. Now notice, when they are helped with this help, "many shall cleave to them with flatteries." So, Constantine, he turned Christianity into a sort of national, state,

political sort of engine, by which men could be exalted into all sorts of worldly offices. And hereby many did cleave unto them with flatteries. They flattered themselves; they flattered others. And so, when things go well externally, there are plenty of professors. But if the Lord, even at this time, were to take his fan in his hand, and come to purge the floor, it strikes me we should find a vast amount of chaff; for the wicked shall be as chaff; and all are wicked that are not born of God, one with Christ, and brought into the bond of the everlasting covenant. The enemy, then, that stands opposed to God's truth shall come to his end, and none shall help him. Not so with the people of God. Now both the gospel and the law are a trouble to the natural man when he hears of them. He does not like the gospel, and he cannot like the law. There is a very significant setting forth of this in the verse preceding our text, if I could but open up its full meaning. It says concerning the man of sin, that "tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him, therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many." "Tidings out of the east shall trouble him." What a vast amount of speculation there is on record in the books of learned men upon these verses! Who the king of the south is, and who the king of the north is, that should push against the pagan power, and what these tidings are from the east, and what these tidings are from the north, none of them can make out, and never will while they take a political view of that which is spiritual. As to the king of the north and the king of the south, well, some suppose that refers to Constantine the Great, he being king both of the south and north of Europe, and that he pushed against the pagan power, and overturned the same. Some have supposed it refers to him. Perhaps it might. But the Christian would understand it like this, that the king stands as the representative of power, and it means that the pagan power of Rome should be destroyed by other powers rolling in upon it from different quarters of the globe, which was the case. But then the next verse, "Tidings out of the east shall trouble him," must be understood spiritually. I just now said that this verse goes back into the historical part of the chapter; though this verse stands so near to the end of the chapter, it belongs to ages that are referred to further back in the chapter. Now, then, what are these tidings from the east, or sunrising, as it might be rendered? What are they? Why, the gospel of the blessed God. Let us see if we can get a sample of this; let us see if we can get a scripture to explain to us what is meant by tidings from the east troubling the man of sin; and if we can get a sample of it, and then if we can get a sample of tidings from the north also troubling the man of sin, if we can have the word of God on our side in this, it will enable me again to set forth the two opposite characters, the man who is one with God's truth, and shall be helped, at least with a little help, so as to hold fast the truth, and the man to whom God's truth is offensive. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "there came wise men from the east," that looks something like it, tidings from the east, "saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." And Herod certainly was not a member of Christ's body; Herod certainly was not a Christian; Herod certainly was one of the representatives of the man of sin. "And when Herod heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." A pretty association that; a pretty Jerusalem that was; pretty association certainly! "He was troubled because of the tidings, and all Jerusalem with him." There was a Jerusalem which was in bondage then, as there is a Jerusalem which is in bondage now. The tidings from the east, therefore, were the truths of the gospel. The truths of the gospel trouble the Pope to this day; he is afraid of them. The tidings from the east, from the sunrising, Christ rising into eternal glory, the triumphs of Christ, they trouble the Popish priests to this day. And the Bishop of Oxford is ten times more afraid of the truth of the gospel than he is either of Popery or Puseyism. And nine-tenths of your Church of England ministers, there is here and there one in the Church of England, just here and there one, very few, that I believe are good men, but nine-tenths of them, they are more afraid of the gospel

than they are of Popery, ten times; and they would infinitely rather go over and unite with Popery than they would come over into the light of the sunrising, and stand in the light of the resurrection of Christ, stand in the light of his mediatorial perfection, and stand in the light of that sun that will never go down, in the truths of the everlasting gospel. They would rather be mixed up with the dark clouds and scenes of Popery than they would come into that perfection of light that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Here, then, tidings out of the east, the truths of the gospel, troubled the man of sin. And when the apostles began to preach, they were children of the sunrising; the Sun of righteousness had risen upon them; they were children of light; they were stars in the Savior's hand. Why, the enemy confessed, Why, these men that turn the world upside down are come hither also. So, tidings out of the east shall trouble him. Why, if we let this Jesus thus alone, the whole of the world will go after him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. There is nothing, therefore, that the empty, professing world is so much afraid of as they are of the real light of the real gospel of the blessed God. But do these tidings trouble us? Oh no; they soothe us, they gladden us, they sanctify us, they justify us, they pardon us, they bring us near to God, they reveal the mercy of God to us, they reveal the salvation of God to us. And we glory in the luminosity of these glorious truths, they are all truths of light. Christ is the true light. Our God dwells in Christ, and in Christ is no darkness at all; and his saints' dwell in Christ, and that is the light in which they shall dwell. Here, then, tidings from the east in all ages have troubled the man of sin; tidings from the sunrising, that is the idea. How true this is! Well now, a little bit of boast, and it shall go into print too. Why, we plain people, that know our state as sinners, and that are brought to understand the way in which our souls are eternally saved, and that make the Bible our rule, and cleave to that, we can get at a thousand things, meanings, and have the enjoyment of a thousand advantages that human learning is utterly ignorant of, utterly unable to get at. The natural man is sure either to legalize, or else to secularize, or both, the gospel of God. But the man that is spiritual does neither; he will not legalize it, for he feels if it is not of grace he cannot be saved; he cannot secularize it, for he feels that if it refers merely to this world it is not worth having. He therefore takes it in its spiritual character. And so far from these tidings from the east troubling the Christian, Ah, says the Christian, it is my sins that trouble me, and the Lord's absence that troubles me, the inroads of the devil upon me that trouble me, the things of this world that absorb so much of my attention, and that gain so tremendously upon my sympathies as to seem to leave nothing for God. These are my troubles. So far from these luminous tidings, these sunrising tidings, troubling me, they take my troubles away, they take my sorrows away, they take my griefs away. They are glad tidings; they are good news; they are good tidings. And yet nothing is so much hated as these luminous tidings. "Tidings from the east shall trouble him." Take Herod, then, as a specimen. And it says, "He shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." And so Herod, when he saw his plan was overturned; when he saw the wise men of the East were too many for him; when he saw that the wise men of the East dared, in obedience to heaven, to disobey an ungodly monarch of the earth; when he saw this he was full of wrath, just as Daniel foresaw. Not that Daniel refers to that one circumstance only but take that as a sample. He was full of fury, full of wrath, and sent forth to slay all the children in Bethlehem, and the coasts thereof, two years old and under. But could he reach the holy child Jesus? No, no; he could not do that. Oh no! oh no! He slew a great many. "Utterly to destroy." Mark that; "utterly to destroy." You have seen his star in the East, have you? I'll star you! You say he is King of the Jews, do you? I'll king him! And you say you are come to worship him, do you? I'll worship him! Ah, how vain the boast of the mightiest' tyrants! I say, how vain the boast of the mightiest tyrants! What, was a babe, a span long, in a manger, to be safe under the thundering threats of Herod the

Great? Yet he was safe. Just so now. Matters not how weak you are, matters not how mighty your foes are, if God be for you. You are not to measure your foes by what you are, but you are to measure them by what the living God is and when they are stronger than he is, wiser than he is, above him, then you may tremble, and not before. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar shall tremble before Daniel. So it is, then, that tidings out of the East shall trouble him. So, if the truths of the gospel are a trouble to you, that is, if they annoy you, and if you are in antagonism to them, and if you are afraid they are gaining ground, then you belong to the man of sin. Ah! I am a very pious person, sir. The devil likes you the better for that, because he has got you the faster in his talons. He himself also is transformed as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness; but not as ministers of God's righteousness; not as ministers of the work of the Holy Ghost, setting the soul right with God; that is not the kind of righteousness of which they are ministers. Then comes the distinction; the people of God shall hold fast, shall be helped; but to the wicked man the truths of the gospel are troubles, they are in his way, and his language is, "Away with it! away with it!" The language of the heaven-born soul is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Lord, speak to your servant; be not silent unto me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit." The meaning is clear enough, you see. Nothing to do but abide by the Bible.

But tidings out of the North shall trouble him as well. Let us have a scripture; let us have no surmising, no human conceit, no mere human opinion, let us have the word of God to help us. I think we have got at the meaning of tidings out of the East troubling him; and it is a great mercy when they do so trouble a sinner as to make him concerned about salvation: that is being troubled the right way. But out of the North also. Well, we will have a scripture, if there be one, to explain to us what these tidings are out of the North. And I should think we could find a scripture that would show to us that these tidings out of the North mean the approaching righteous and sure judgments of the great God upon all his enemies, living and dying in that state. I should think that is meant by tidings out of the North. Also I should suppose that ministers had need of very great boldness to stand out in decision for the judgments of God, as well as to stand out in decision for the gospel of God, and to take forth the precious from the vile. Amalgamate and soften the judgments, and make the mercy uncertain, and thus conform the tidings of the Bible to the taste of the world, and nobody will be offended; but let the judgments of God have their place, and let the truths of the gospel have their place, and thus rightly divide the word of truth, we thus become offensive to all, I mean mere professors, or non-professors. Tidings from the North. I go to the 1st chapter of Jeremiah, and the Lord reveals to Jeremiah an almond tree. "What do you see? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree." Why was that vision granted? Because the almond tree is the first tree that blossoms. It blossoms in early spring, and blossoms very rapidly, and the blossoms last but a little while; and the Lord made that a figure of the nearness of his judgments that were to come. And so, you, man or woman, dead in sin, how far off is your hell? Not far, not far; it is hastening on. There are the blossoms of mortal life now, but presently they are gone, and you are gone, and your soul lost. Life itself, the longest is but a vapor that appears for a little time, and it is gone. Again, "What do you see? I see a seething pot, and the face thereof is toward the north." Now comes the explanation. "Out of the North." Now, historically, that refers, I am aware, to the incursions of Nebuchadnezzar's army; yet it stands, of course, instructive and figurative. "Out of the North an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands." Here are the northern tidings that trouble them; judgments shall trouble them. May not, like the rich man, trouble them

till they die; but they will trouble them, they will trouble them. If the Oriental tidings, that is, the tidings of the gospel, be not to them a joyful sound, but an offensive sound, then shall come the northern tidings, the judgments of the great God. Mark their character. They stand severed from the God of Israel; they burn incense to other gods. What is your duty-faith? Why, a false god, and a false gospel, and a false spirit. What is your free-will? Why, nothing else but the gods of Popery mingling up with Protestantism. We have plenty of Protestant popery in our day, plenty. Say some, I wish you would not be so bitter as that. You ought not to be like it. No, I know people do not like it. Even some good people say, You might be a little more soft. Soft! Would you? Have me softer, would you? I am soft enough already. Well, but you might be a little softer. Just go and tell that to Jeremiah, will you? Say, Jeremiah, you might be a little softer. I will tell you what Jeremiah would say to you. Soft! why, the Lord has just told me that he has made me a defended city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall. That is not very soft, say you. No; but very strong though. Ah! so it is, that is what we want. Now the Lord says, "You, therefore, gird up your loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command you. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them." Be my servant; be a good soldier of Jesus Christ; care nothing for your life, care nothing for anything under the sun, care nothing but for the Captain of your salvation, care nothing but for the truth, care nothing but for God. "And they shall fight against you," kings, and priests, and people, "but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you." And so, these enemies went forth in the fury of their power against Jeremiah, put him into the dungeon, into the stocks, could not kill him at last. And so, they have gone forth in the fury of their power since, and so they will, too, as far as they can. Thus, then, one event happens to all, as far as death is concerned; second, that the people of God are helped with a little help; third, that the tidings of the gospel are offensive to the natural man, but truly acceptable to the poor sinner, sensible of his state, and the man born of God; and fourth, that those to whom the truths of the gospel are offensive shall die under the judgments of the great God; they shall die under the terrible judgments of an offended God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I see I have no time this morning to speak of the end the Christian shall come to, and of course I shall not preach upon this text again, not directly; and so I must close with a few remarks upon the end that the wicked shall come to. I have often in my own mind run through the 16th chanter. I am not going to do so now, but just refer to it, of the Book of Revelation, as descriptive of the destruction of every vestige, of every iota, of the hope of the natural man.