

MOABITES SAVED

A SERMON

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By Mister JAMES WELLS

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“The oppressors are consumed out of the land.” Isaiah 16:4

THERE are some scriptures that have both a literal and a spiritual meaning; but this paragraph in the beginning of this chapter, from the first, to the fifth verse, evidently has no literal meaning at all, but simply a spiritual one. Hence, while the learned are searching for circumstances politically and nationally that would fulfil such scriptures as these, the plain Christian sees that they have a spiritual meaning, that they belong to the new and the ultimate covenant, and when tested by the law of that covenant their meaning is opened up and becomes self-evident. So true are the words of the Savior when he said, “I am the true light;” and so wise are his words also when he said, “Learn of me.” Everything that we need must be learnt of him, as everything we shall ever receive we shall obtain by receiving him. All the blessings we are to receive on earth we shall obtain in receiving him; and when we come to die, all that we are to receive in heaven we shall obtain by receiving him. Let us, then, bless the Lord that all things were gathered together, as regards God's arrangements, in Christ before time began; and those deep counsels shall at the end bring us into what our text proclaims, where all oppressors, where all evil, where all adversaries, are forever perished; “for the oppressors are consumed out of the land.” I have taken these words as our text this morning more, perhaps, for convenience than anything else, as they seem to embody the whole paragraph to which they belong, and I shall therefore notice the preceding part of the chapter in connection with our text, as far as time will permit. The subject, as you will perceive, is that of gospel freedom.

I shall notice, then, first, *the order of worship to be observed in this land, this heavenly land of freedom.* Secondly, *the ingathering of the people to this land.* Thirdly and lastly, *the prospects lying before the people thus gathered in.*

First, then, I notice *the order of worship to be observed in this land of freedom.* You cannot, with the fear of the Lord before your eyes, read the Holy Scriptures without seeing that the order of worship is a matter that has ever been essential to the welfare of man, and that whenever that worship has been perverted, anything added to it or anything taken from it, the Lord has always reckoned such worship to be in vain. He will never own anything but that which is after his own order. This made the apostle say “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel;” He well knew if the Lord

were served acceptably, it must be entirely by grace. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Now the first verse of this chapter very beautifully sets before us the order of this worship. It says, "Send you the Lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion." Now observe here, first, that the Lord is represented as the ruler of the land. He lives in the land of promise. There is an allusion here to the land of Canaan, and the Lord was the ruler there. He chose that land, and he ruled that land, and he dwelt in that land, and he blessed that land. This makes that land a type of the gospel. He chose that land temporally, but he has chosen the liberty of the gospel eternally; he blessed that land temporally, but he has blessed the gospel land eternally; he dwelt in that land temporally, but he dwells in this heavenly land everlastingly: the name of that land shall be, "The Lord is there." Now the first thing named in the government here is that of a lamb. "Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land." That is what the Jew is to do literally, and that is what the Christian is to do spiritually. How are we to send the lamb to the ruler? How are we to send the lamb to God? Why, by prayer; that is the way we are to do it. Hence, John was far enough on, and so it appears his disciples were too, to know what the first thing was that they needed, and therefore he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." And there is not much doubt that they would be led to meditate very spiritually and very advantageously upon those beautiful words, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus Christ has taken away from God's presence and taken away from you your heart sin, your lip sin, your life sin, original sin, past sin, present sin, and sin to come, he has taken it all away. And if that be done, then we need not fear anything else. This made the apostle say, "We are more than conquerors." But how are we more than conquerors? Not certainly by any good on our part, as sinners or creatures considered. He says, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Now where is the expression of his love? Here it is, in appointing this spotless Lamb to redeem us, to bear our sins and take them away. And then, not only so, but our God of course abides by his dear Son, and abides eternally by what the dear Savior has done. For the Lord our God foresaw that he should be everlastingly satisfied with his dear Son, and Jesus Christ foresaw that he should be ever satisfied with the work he should achieve, and he also foresaw that when his people were brought to understand that they would be satisfied too; for he says in one place, "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness." You will see in this a contrast to all human choice. You have your likes and sentiments and choices, but you cannot tell before-hand how far you may remain satisfied with what you choose. It is not so with the Lord our God. He foresaw that he should be satisfied with his dear Son; he foresaw the delightful testimony that he should bear, and that he should never alter that testimony, that "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Jesus Christ foresaw that his soul would not be left in hell, nor would God the Father suffer his Holy One to see corruption. He foresaw he should rise into the path of life, he foresaw he should reach that happy land to which our text refers, where there is fulness of joy, where there are pleasures for evermore. And, Christian, are you altogether ignorant, not altogether, of the delightful truth that there remains for you a perfect satisfaction? "We shall", if we are not now realizing so much as to be satisfied, "we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple." And David has another thought very beautiful; may the Lord inspire us with its force and meaning, and help us to live more and more in the spirit of that testimony of David, when, looking forward to the last great rising day, he says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness."

"Send you the Lamb" send his name to heaven; you must plead him in his dignity and work, "send you the Lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness." Now the word *Sela* there means

“a rock.” It means, therefore, that he rules from the rock to the wilderness, “unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.” This is descriptive of the rule of the ruler of the land. First, he rules from the rock to the wilderness, and that rock is Christ. God has purposes of mercy to that Magdalene, to that thief on the cross, to that Saul of Tarsus, to Gentile lost and perishing sinners, and they are all in the wilderness of sin, in the wilderness of Sinai, in the wilderness of death, in the wilderness of desolation, afar off from God, and are as the heath of the wilderness, and they see not when good comes, but they inherit the parched places, and all their fleshly hopes are withered up. But our God sets out from the rock; the Holy Spirit goes from the rock, Christ Jesus, into the wilderness. The Holy Spirit, I say it with reverence and with pleasure, cannot find in all the wilderness of this world a sinner so steeped in sin but the blood of Christ can cleanse that sinner; he cannot find in all the wilderness of this world a sinner so far off that the dear Savior’s salvation cannot save him, for he is able to save unto the uttermost. And the Lord, by Christ Jesus, triumphantly asks these questions, “Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea” the sea of sins, that mighty ocean that has carried you away; I have dried the whole of it up; I clothe your fleshly heavens with blackness, and bring about such a revolution that you shall have light nowhere but by Christ Jesus the Lord. He rules, then, from the rock to the wilderness. Here is the Lamb first with God, and then the Holy Spirit comes by Jesus Christ into the wilderness. And hence; “waters shall break out in the wilderness, and in the habitation of dragons, where each lay” all of us are like dragons, like wild beasts, by nature, “shall be grass, with reeds and rushes.” There shall spring up new men and new women, and they shall be brought into the way of holiness; and the ransomed of the Lord, redemption having reached them, their faces, with one heart and mind, shall be set toward Zion, and they shall come to Zion, hence you read here of the daughter of Zion. ” And they shall come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy shall be unto them.” He rules from the rock to the wilderness, and then from the wilderness “unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.” He comes from the wilderness lays hold of the sinner. Ah, says Satan, God rules so far in his mercy as to bring these tidings to you, but will he, how he has come to you, so rule in mercy as to take you home to Zion? Free-will says, That’s the question; and duty-faith says something like it almost, though it pretends to a little higher ground than free-will. But the Lord says it shall be done; that he that has begun the good work shall carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Savior reach our sin-blasted world, but he will take care that we shall reach that heavenly world wherein dwells righteousness, where the sun never sets, the stars ever shine, the moon ever brilliant, everything always happy, no complaining in the streets. He rules, then, unto Mount Zion; his sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands. Here is the Lamb of God; here is the ruler of the land, ruling from the rock to the wilderness. Look back, some of you, if you can, for it is good to remember the Lord’s first dealings with you. He found you when you were a stranger, when you were without strength Christ died for the ungodly. He commended his love toward you while you were yet sinners; came to you in the wilderness; and you sometimes sing, and sing truly too, that:

“Grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”

Oh! how stable and vital is the eternal indwelling of the almighty Spirit of God! How strong are the dear Savior’s hands to hold us fast through all the storms and vicissitudes of life and death! How strong is the love and are the hands of God our Father to hold us fast! for “no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hands.” Here, then, is a land where every oppressor is consumed,

where victory is set to your account, victory over everything. You may be overcome in many respects at the first, but God shall overcome at the last. First, then, here is the lamb; then the ruling from the rock to the wilderness, and then from the wilderness to the mount of the daughter of Zion; the daughter of Zion there meaning the heaven. A great many may so rule as to reach an object, but can they so rule as to gain the ultimate end? It does not take very great skill in a general to lead an army into the field; but it takes a great deal of skill to bring that army out again without losing it, and to gain the victory without destroying his men. Now our God gains the victory, but does not lose a man; never lost a man yet; not one of his soldiers has ever been killed yet. Why, say you, thousands have been put to death in the flesh. But that does not kill them in the spirit; no. If you could see the martyr at the very moment he departs, see him lay down his life, and the previously hidden powers of his soul expand into perfection, if you could see him rise triumphant to heaven, what would you do? Why, you would fall down at his feet, and think it was the Master; and he would say, "See you do it not; I am your fellow-servant." Now I have left that cottage of clay; now I have left that infantile state; now I have left that dark abode; now I have left that world wherein I saw through a glass darkly, and now I see face to face. I am not the Master, I am only one of his servants; worship God. Well might John say, "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Secondly, I notice *the ingathering of the people to this land*; of which ingathering I will take a threefold view. "For it shall be, that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon." Here is a wandering bird. I meet with an inquiring sinner. What is the matter, friend? What are you seeking after? After the Lord, after mercy, after salvation; I am solitary. How came this about? Oh, I was cast out of the nest; I was in the nest of the world; I had made my nest, and almost feathered my nest; and one said, and I do not know but that I was just upon saying so too, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and take your ease." I did not exactly say that, but I should have said it. I had almost feathered my nest. And instead of the Lord cutting me off, though I am afraid he will cut me off yet, he has spoiled my nest, convinced me what a fool I was to make a nest in this world, or to seek rest in that way. He has shown me that I was as great a fool as the man that would think he could get a comfortable nap amidst the waves of the sea, or could sleep on the top of the mast. I feel that all might be gone in a moment, and now I want to find the people of God, and the God of the people; now I want to find Jesus Christ; now I want to find that which the Lord alone can show me. What, won't you go back to your old nest? If I had come out of the nest myself, I might have gone back and settled down again; but the Lord has cast me out, and destroyed the nest; it is gone. Ah, says the man thus cast out, I will make a nest now. I will be good all day long, that's one feather; and good tomorrow, that's another; and so he goes on, and goes on, till he makes himself thoroughly comfortable by his own doings, Ah, he says, I have got a nest now, I am not going to be one of those high doctrine people; I am not going to be one of those dangerous people; I will not go to hear those ministers everywhere spoken against, not I. I am going to be pious, eminently pious, remarkably pious, decidedly pious, uncommonly pious, wonderfully pious, constantly pious, the most pious creature possible; and always wear a smiling countenance, and always be happy, and God himself shall be my debtor. Very well, very well; go on. By-and-bye some affliction sets in, some terrible upset takes place; ah, what rebellion arises in the heart! what hard thoughts! perhaps curse God, and hate God. This is a great mystery. And then comes in the Scripture, with all the fiery force of Sinai: "Cursed is he that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and "he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole," Why, say you, I thought I had got a good nest

now; it was a religious nest. Ah, it was one of your own building, though and “as an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters, over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings,” so the Lord turns you out of that nest, and you can go back no more; you want a better place than a humanly devised one to rest in. Thus, then, as a bird, cast out, first out of the world, then out of false confidences; by-and-bye brought to see Jesus, lay hold of the truth, and shall rest nowhere but in the Lord himself. But then this was to be “at the fords of Arnon.” “As a wandering bird, cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab,” these regenerated souls, “shall beat the fords of Arnon.” Go to the Old Testament, the Book of Numbers, and you find the Israelites encamped by the brooks of Arnon, and there it was that Balaam proclaimed the blessedness of Israel. And we will suppose, for the sake of bringing it round to a Christian meaning, that there were some of the Moabites, some of the daughters of Moab, for the Israelites were not allowed to distress the Moabites, nor to contend with them in battle; nor to distress the Ammonites, nor to contend with them in battle. The Israelites showed them a friendly feeling rather than not. Why did the Lord thus shelter the Ammonites and the Moabites? Because they were the offspring of his servant Lot; I say no more. Now we will, then, assume for a moment that some of the Moabites listened to this blessedness of the Israelites by the fords of Arnon, for that is where Balaam proclaimed the fact that God had brought them out of Egypt. We will suppose a Moabite listening to the speech of Balaam, and being converted to the Lord. If what I am now saying be true, Ruth was not the first Moabite that was cast out of her nest, and wandered about until she came to the mount of the daughter of Zion. We will suppose a Moabite saying, What, brought them out of Egypt? he will not behold iniquity in Jacob. Why, the gods I have been serving never spoke like that. Neither will he see perverseness in Israel. I should like, to be one of them. And the Lord his God is with him. And the shout of a king is among them; no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel; the Lord his God is with him, he has as it were the strength of a unicorn. Thus, then, the Israelites encamping at the fords of Arnon, and these things being proclaimed there, are a figure of that Christian church that should be formed under the ministry of the apostles, and should proclaim to the Moabites, the Gentile world, the wonders of the God of Israel. How was Cornelius brought in? He was a Moabite; that is, a Gentile, because the Moabites represent the Gentiles at large. So, you read, when the apostle said, “Lo, we turn to the Gentiles, for so we are commanded,” then were the Gentiles glad, they were delighted, when they heard this, and they came together eagerly the next sabbath to hear the word of the Lord. Thus, then, here is the ruler of the land, here is the casting out of the nest, here is being brought to the true Israel of God, and consequently to the God of Israel. That is one step in the ingathering. Now the next thing is how the church is to receive these people that have thus wandered. And I do thirst for many of you, long to see more of you come forward. And any of you that have a spark of grace in your hearts, and a little experience, you ought to leave your names in the vestry, not keep yourselves in the dark; you ought to come before the church, you ought to come forward and be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you ought to come forward and testify what God has done for your souls; you ought to come forward and show you are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Now, then, in what way were these converted Moabites to be received? The Lord instructs the church thus: “Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wanders” “Take counsel.” What counsel are we to take? We are to see these persons, and to hear what they can say concerning the way in which the Lord has brought them to hope in his mercy, and when we have taken sufficient counsel, when the deacons and the minister have consulted the matter over, they say, This case we can recommend

to the church. Then we come before the church; and then, after they have given their testimony before the church, the church takes counsel; and then, if we have a pretty comfortable hope that it is the work of the Lord, we receive them. "Take counsel, execute judgment;" do that which is perfectly right; bring in Jesus Christ, stand by the truth; do not deviate from that. "Hide the outcasts." Now in that day it was a dangerous thing for a Moabite to become an Israelite, for if the Moabites could get hold of him again, they would Moabite him. And you know in our own happy land it was at one time a dangerous thing to be a Protestant; it was a dangerous thing to advocate liberty of conscience; it was a dangerous thing to defy the Pope and his agents, and to stand out on gospel ground, determined that no man should stand between you and the Judge of all; that God, and God alone, should be the judge of your conscience, the ruler of your soul, the arbiter of your eternal destiny.

Now, then, the church was to do as the upright, the excellent, the faithful, the honorable, the heaven-taught, the grace-taught, the divinely favored Rahab did, "hide the outcasts." So, she hid the spies, used lawful evasions. All the attacks of the moderns, all their protests against the integrity of Rahab, do not alter her integrity. She hid the outcasts, she bewrayed not these spies; came off faithful at the last. My conscience in this matter remains unsullied, my soul happy, my mind comfortable, in the fact that I believe I have in what I have said the mind of the Eternal Spirit upon what that faithful woman did. "Hide the outcasts, bewray not him that wander."

If we lived in times of persecution, and a man came and joined our church, and that man was in consequence exposed to confiscation of goods, perhaps to the loss of personal liberty, perhaps to other evils as well; and if the persecutors were to come and say, "Is that person with you?" "What person? I know nothing about it." "Well, has he not come before your church?" "I know nothing at all about it." I would not know anything about it. "Bewray not him that wanders." David's soldiers found a man in the field; his master had left him because he fell sick; "And they said to him, Can you bring us down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that you wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this company." Well, we won't deliver you to your master. So, he brought them down, "and David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken away; not a thing was lost. 23rd of Deuteronomy, "You shall not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto you;" that is, who has fled from slavery; "he shall dwell with you, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of your gates, where it suits him best; you shall not oppress him." He may go and hear any minister he may prefer; he may go where he likes, so that the Lord receives him, so that he belongs to the Lord; let that settle the matter. Thus, then, the church is to receive them kindly, and to hide them as far as it is needful. Now I shall not mention names, but we have some now that have joined, and are joining, by the sly. How is that? say you? Why, they have very wicked husbands, who would half kill them if they knew they came here. Now I suppose our pious protesters would go and tell the husband, and say, "Do you know that your wife has joined the Church? Do you know your wife has been baptized? Do you know I saw her sitting among the people at the ordinance?" I suppose they would be so pious as to do this; I suppose they would think that they ought not to hide the outcast, but to expose them, and that it is their duty to bewray him that wanders. But not so would God counsel his church; he counsels them "to hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wanders." We are to treat them kindly. And the church was to, do something else, "Make your shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday." Now that is a beautiful scripture, and is accomplished in the experience of every Christian. What is the shadow that is

dark as night? The law of God. And what is the noonday? Christ Jesus. And when you are brought to see the perfection of Christ, that will make the shadow of the law appear as dark as night. Ah, say you, I now see that the law is a scene of darkness; I now see that if I were under the law I should be under darkness, I should be in midnight; but now in the light of the gospel I see the darkness of the law; now in the peace of the gospel I see the fiery wrath of the law. When the light of the gospel shines into the soul, it cuts off all law confidences, and shows that there is no day in the law, no night in the gospel: the one is nothing but night, the other nothing but day; the one nothing but bondage, the other nothing but liberty. This is making the shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday. And it is a remarkable thing that the more you have the light of the gospel the more you see the darkness of sin, the evil of it; the more you see the darkness of the law; the more you see the blackness and darkness under which the world lies.

Now concerning these people that are thus gathered in there is a command. Here, I think, in the next verse the word Moab means the world. "Let my outcasts" mark, they are my outcasts; I have, cast them out of the world, so they could not stop there. You blame me for going so far, do you? I cannot help it. I should have stopped at some halfway house or another; but the Lord cast me out, and cast me out, till he brought me to where I am. "Let my outcasts dwell with you, Moab; be you a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceases;" then comes in our text, "The oppressors are consumed out of the land." Now what does this mean? It means that with all the world's enmity, they shall be compelled to do you all the favor that God intends. Why, some of you. that are shopkeepers, many of your customers if they knew your religion would hardly come to your shops. You thank them for their custom, and it is right you should do so; a little civility will go a long way, but it is the Lord, that you really have to thank. You say, I thank the people for their custom, and, I will not speak to them about my religion unless they wish me to do so. The Lord has said, "Let mine outcasts dwell with you, Moab." I will not quarrel with the Moabites, for as much as lies in me I am to live peaceably with all men; that is the Lord's command. Now this is just the same as in the 12th of the Revelation, where the church fled into the wilderness. This world is not a wilderness providentially, for in that sense it is full of the Lord's goodness; but it is a wilderness spiritually. Hence you cannot have any spiritual communion with the carnal man, however admirable his character may be in all the relations of life, and as a citizen of the world. You may do business with them with full confidence and much pleasure; still at the same time, if you come to anything spiritual, there you are out of their sphere, there you are out of their element. We ought to be humble even under this view of it, because the questions are asked, "Who makes you to differ? and what have you that you have not received?" The Lord suffers us, or rather compels us thus to dwell, and he will take care that we shall have all the favors and all the providential advantages that he has laid up for us. But that is not all; we must not stop here. There is another reason why we are to dwell in Moab, and why the Lord will make a way for us in Moab, and that is, every Christian is a light, every Christian is a light-bearer. The church is called a candlestick, a light-bearer, that is the meaning of the word "candlestick" when properly defined as to its use, a light-bearer. Every Christian is a light-bearer. You may say a word or two in the ears of a natural man, and you may think nothing of what you have said, but it flashes, by the blessing of God, a light into his mind. He goes off, and he says, That man made such a remark, and it has flashed direct into my soul. I never saw before what a sinner I am; it has made me very miserable. Perhaps that one remark leads, under God, to that man's conversion. You know not, Christians, by your walk and conduct, how much good you do; for while you are honoring the Lord he will honor you, and though you may not see all the results, yet you may depend upon it

the Lord has his gracious purposes. When Naomi was returning from Moab, she put her two daughters-in-law to the test, advising them to go back; and Ruth proved that she had received the word vitally. Ah, that was more than a reward for all she had lost on earth. Here is a never-dying soul; here is a precious soul plucked as a brand from the everlasting burning. And therefore, do not find fault with the position in which the Lord has placed you. Do not say, Ah, if I were but somewhere else, I should do better. Depend upon it that is a mistake. Make the best use of your present position. Make it so good by your industry and care that you shall show you are fitted for a higher. Do not spend your time in grumbling at the badness of your position, and that if you were in another you could do better; make the present position good. That is the way the Savior did. He grew up out of his place. He came under the law, but he did his work so well that he grew up out of it; he came under sin, but he did his work so well that he grew up out of it; he went into the grave, but he did his work so well that he grew up out of it. Wherefore God, as Christ did so well in the humble department, has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name that is named.

“Let my outcasts dwell with you, Moab; be you a covert to them.” Thus, the Lord not only blesses you in Christ, but he blesses you in the world. I need not remind you of Joseph, Mordecai, Daniel, and David in the camp of the Philistines. If the Lord did not take greater care of us than we do of ourselves, I do not know what would become of us. Here it is, then, there is freedom in Christ, and care taken of us in the world.

Lastly, I notice *the prospects lying before the people thus gathered in*. I think that the next verse is descriptive of the prospects of the people of God: “And in mercy shall the throne be established.” Here is a mercy throne. Why, what a prospect is that! Here is a throne established in mercy. Mercy all day, shall I need mercy all night, mercy all day tomorrow; mercy while we live, mercy when we die, mercy when we rise, mercy our theme for ever. “His mercy endures forever.” “In mercy shall the throne be established.” And then it is added, which we may feel full confidence in, “And he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David.” Not only mercy, but here is truth. Many kings make promises, but they do not always perform them. I suppose David found this out, and that made him say, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” So it is, David; I think so too. Here, then, is a truthful throne.

“The sacred truths his lips pronounce
Shall firm as heaven endure;
And if he speaks a promise once,
The eternal grace is sure.”

“He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment and hastening righteousness.”