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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MYSTIC CLOUD AND LITTLE BOOK.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1869,

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSLEY STREET.

“As he hath declared to his servants the prophets!”—Revelation x. 7.

THIS is one of the scriptures in this Book which direct us to the way in which we are to get at the meaning of the Book. We are here directed to the prophets; “as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” Last Lord’s day morning we found the sealed book spoken of in this book in the 29th of Isaiah, and also the opening of the seals we found in that same chapter. Of course it would be in part to preach the sermon over again to recapitulate the points. I may just therefore say that as the 29th of Isaiah closes with a twofold promise, that “they that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine;” so you find in the opening of the seals, and the numbers recorded in this 7th of the Revelation, a number that no man can number, who all originally, as we all do, erred in spirit, but they were brought to understand the way of salvation, and they realised salvation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. “And they that murmured shall learn doctrine;” and so they had learnt the doctrine that they were saved by grace through faith, and that not of themselves, it was the gift of God. And as to the three equestrian seals—the red, the black, and the pale horse—you may find their prototypes first in the Assyrian power, which expatriated the ten tribes of Israel; secondly, in the Babylonian power, that took away the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and thirdly, in the Roman power, that took away the Jews at last in their final dispersion. There you find the prototypes of these three equestrian seals. And the prototype of the first equestrian seal—that of the white horse—you find in the 45th Psalm, where the Saviour is represented as riding forth for the conquest of stubborn sinners, and bringing them to his feet, in order that they may share in the victory that he has wrought, and appear, as recorded in the 7th chapter of this Book, before the throne of God, without fault, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And as to the 8th chapter—the sounding of the trumpets, that set forth judgments upon various parts, the plagues of Egypt and other judgments of old are the prototypes of these judgments that should come during the goepel dispensation upon the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as to the locusts spoken of in the 9th chapter, you get them in the 2nd of

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Joel; it is the same thing. But then I do not intend to preach many sermons upon the Revelation, perhaps not above one more after this morning; for if I were to attempt to take up the Book, I could not do it under twelve months; it would take a whole volume of sermons to take this Book from beginning to end, and to open up every part. And therefore I shall just say a few things to justify what I have proposed—that this Book should be read in the light of the holy prophets.

Before I enter upon the parts that come before us this morning, I might just remind you of the goodness and mercy of God in this. Is it not better that we should be directed to God himself for the meaning than to men? I have heard several ministers say, Unless you are well versed in church history, unless you are well up in a knowledge of the various races of bishops that have occupied seats in certain cities—Carthage, Rome, and Alexandria—and I don't know what all, you cannot understand, say they, the Book of the Revelation. Whereas God's word directs us to his book; and the Old and New Testament are like the two cherubims on the mercy-seat; they touched each other, and they both looked down to the mercy-seat. And so the Old Testament points to the mercy-seat, and the New Testament points to the same mercy-seat. Therefore, as the Lord has declared these things unto his servants the prophets, to the prophets we will go, and that is the sure word of prophecy; and may the Lord answer in our experience the prayer of the apostle Paul, when he says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

First, we have in this 10th chapter *the angel clothed with the cloud*. Secondly, we have *a little book, that is open*. Thirdly, we have *the universal dominion of the Saviour*.

First, *the angel clothed with the cloud*. At the head of this chapter you have this declaration, "I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with the cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." We must not understand this as a literal angel, literally coming down from heaven; we must not understand this as a literal cloud, or a cloud visible to mortal eyes; we must understand it spiritually. The Lord Jesus Christ did come down literally, and afterwards ascended to glory; then after that he was to come spiritually. Let me just name one scripture to show that we must understand this spiritually. The Saviour saith, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, through the Lord's great goodness to our dear old fatherland, there are thousands of twos and threes that are met together in this land to-day, at this very moment while we are assembled together. It cannot mean, therefore, that the Saviour would be bodily present with every two and three. You will at once perceive the impossibility of that. In what sense then is he present? Why, first in his deity, because he is God, and therefore everywhere; secondly, by his Spirit; the Holy Spirit also is omnipresent; and by God the Father also; God the Father is omnipresent; and where Christ is, as Watts says, there the whole deity is known; and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Father, are in all the assemblies of the saints by the work which the Saviour hath wrought, and by the blessings which are to be brought in by the work that he has wrought. We must therefore understand that the angel coming down means the beginning of the gospel dispensation, when Christ came down by his Spirit as an angel, as the messenger of the everlasting covenant; and he has been coming down from that day to this, and will never cease to show himself spiritually to his people while time shall last. Let us now go to the Old Testament, and get the meaning of this; for this mighty angel means, I say, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that

he is the attraction, the protection, the deliverer of, and the conqueror for, his people. In the 14th of Exodus you find a cloud; and it is a remarkable thing that the Saviour in that cloud in the 14th of Exodus is called by two names; he is there called an Angel and he is called the Lord. It is said, "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night." Now, first, this angel was the attraction of the Israelites. This is the prototype. What he was then to their natural vision he is now spiritually to us. He is said to be the angel of the covenant, or the messenger of the covenant, which means in substance that he is the Mediator of the new covenant. Where, then, shall we see the atonement for all our sins? Why, in Christ; and that becomes attractive; and we are drawn to God by the atonement of Christ. There is no reason we can assign why we should cease to pray, or cease to seek the Lord. If there were no atonement, if sin were not ended, if Christ had not put away sin, then we might draw back, and feel there was no hope. But by his atonement he is the attraction. And then by his righteousness also, which he has brought in, he is the attraction, and also by the order of things; for it is a remarkable thing, and worthy of your observation, that there was not the slightest conditionality connected with the Israelites coming out of Egypt: that part of their dispensation was unconditional and absolute, and therefore infallible, beautifully typical of that eternal salvation that is by Jesus Christ. These three things, then, are our attraction—his atonement, his righteousness, and the certainty of his truth. When the Lord appeared to Moses, concerning their coming out of Egypt, their entire deliverance was certain; there was no possibility of failure. So in this great matter of eternal salvation; though I am aware it may be the lot of many of you to live almost perpetually in the regions of doubting and fearing; not doubting and fearing as to God's truth, but doubting and fearing as to your interest in it. I must say a kind word or two here to such. Can you say that the atonement of Jesus Christ is so attractive to you that you see its value, and that, if you have any hope in God, it is by that? And can you say that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is so attractive to you that you see it is that which exempts you from all condemnation? For he is the end of the law to every one that believeth. And can you say as to the certainty of God's truth, that its being yea and amen, according to a covenant that is sure, is attractive to you?—can you say that? Ah, then, if you can, you can say what no one soul now in hell can look back to its existence in this world, and say,—That atonement once drew me to God; that righteousness once drew me towards God; the certainty of that truth once drew me towards God, and yet—I am in hell! No; the rich man in hell was an Arminian, and he said, "If one be sent from the dead my brethren will repent." God abode by his plan, and the rich man abode by his plan; and see the Arminianism of the man that was in hell. Now this cloud was to draw the Israelites out of Egypt, to attract them. And just so now, if Jesus Christ be thus attractive to you,—you lost? You may doubt, you may fear, and you may want something in your experience which perhaps the Lord will not give you; but the Lord meets you thus,—"Blessed is he that is not offended in me." You drawn thus towards God, and yet be lost at last?—you, who can say that you like to see such a scripture as that in the 102nd Psalm—"He will regard the prayer of the destitute." You can say, that gives me a little hope, and yet you be lost? And again, that he hears "the groaning of the prisoner." You be lost at last? No; you may sing that hymn that we do sometimes sing—

Yet this redeeming angel came,
 So vile a worm to bless;
 He took with gladness all my blame,
 And gave his righteousness.

So Jesus Christ hath said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Come then, you little ones, take a little courage; look about a little, and see what a difference there is, with all your doubts, and fears, and darkness, between your present and your former position, when those things that are now clear to you were hidden from you, and had no attraction for you; but now they have; these are they, then, that follow the Angel. Zechariah beautifully describes the character and the blessedness they have by Jesus Christ. "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David"—that is, shall be as Christ; the word "David" there meaning "Beloved"; and the house of David shall be as God." How so? It goes on to explain—"as the angel of the Lord before them"; so that whatever Christ is, they shall be. Then, secondly, this cloud came between them and the Egyptians; in other words, if I can speak more plainly, this cloud came between anything and everything that could hurt them. So Jesus Christ stands between you and your sins, and your sins must destroy him before they can reach you; as the Egyptians must destroy God Almighty before they could destroy the Israelites, for Jehovah was in the cloud. Your adversaries must first destroy him before they can do any fatal injury to you. The tribulations of the way are only so many spurs, so many helps. What are your tribulations? Why, they are nothing but the flutterings of the parent eagle's wings to stir up your nest, to keep the eaglets awake; and then presently, when he has sufficiently shaken your worldly free-will and infidel dust out of you, he will take you on his wings, bear you on his wings, carry you away in spirit, and make you say with the church of old, "Ere I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Hence the Lord says in the 19th of Exodus, "I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." The Lord help you to look at Christ as standing between you and all that is against you, and as standing between you and God, as the way to God.

Then, again, it is said of this Angel that his face was as the sun." You see how beautifully it answers; the Egyptians turned their backs, as it were, upon the Lord, and said, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him? We will not let Israel go." Very well; the Lord turned his back, as it were, upon them. But he turned his face towards the Israelites, and that threw such a light upon them, that darkness completely vanished; they were entirely in the light. The Egyptians were entirely in the dark; the Egyptians knew not what was in the cloud; but the Israelites knew that He was in the cloud who was their light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Just so it is now. Jesus shines upon his people, and they have light; they behold his glory. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And his face was as the sun, not only to denote the brightness of his presence, but to denote the delight he had in the victory that he was working for the Israelites; to denote the delight he had in carrying out the goodwill of God the Father; to denote the pleasure with which he looks upon his people; for "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." God help us to look upon Christ with the same approbation with which he looks upon us, with the same pleasure with which he looks upon us, with the same smiling face with which he looks upon us; for he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh to see how wondrously an interposing God works victory after victory, brings in mercy after mercy, blessing after blessing, until all shall be complete, the last enemy laid down in eternal silence. "And his feet as pillars of fire"—just as the bottom of the cloud. The Lord not merely shone upon the people, or else their shadow would have made the path

dark. I very often stand in my own light; so in order that they should not be able to darken their own path, his very feet were as pillars of fire; so that the light played between their feet, and the light ran along smooth, calm, soft; not dazzling, confounding light, but such as the eye could look upon with pleasure and with ease; and there was the path more than macadamised, not a stumbling block in the way; there were the crystal walls on the right hand and on the left; all was luminous; and such an influence that light had upon the people, that it made the old young, it made the lame leap for joy, and it made the lazy active. I dare say there were some of them, like some of us, rather lazy in some of these things; but it so made them alive, there was not one feeble person among them. And if the Lord did this in that temporal salvation, what will he do ultimately in eternal salvation, that hath in it all the immortality of his nature, all the incorruptibility of his eternal perfections, when our souls shall be brought into the strength of God himself? "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Then again, "a rainbow was upon his head"; the Egyptians did not see that, but the Israelites did. There no doubt was something like a rainbow on this cloud, they would say,—Ah, this means peace, this means tranquillity, this means beauty, this means something pleasing. I never knew any one nervous yet at the rainbow. Thunder and lightning are enough to make any one nervous sometimes. But there is something in the rainbow so tranquil, so pleasing, that we all like to look at it. And so it denoted that the Lord came to them with a message of peace. "Not a dog"—see in what a contemptuous way the Lord speaks of the enemies of his people;—calls them dogs, while he calls his own people sheep, and lambs, and children, dear children. You may not like it, some of you enemies, but it is so. "Not a dog shall move his tongue against any of the children of Israel; against man or against beast." And so it was. He came with a message of peace. "Stand still, and see the salvation of God. The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see no more for ever."

Now the cloud literally and prototypically was one thing, but the cloud spiritually and antitypically is another. The apostle in the 12th of Hebrews saith, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." We have a good cloud of witnesses here this morning, and we know well that the people of God can bear testimony that Christ doth come in a cloud of prophetic and apostolical witnesses. That is the cloud with which he hath clothed himself;—he is in the prophecies of the prophets, and in the testimonies of the apostles. That is the cloud with which he still stands arrayed; and the people of God are brought into the light side of that cloud. Sometimes an enemy just peeps round the corner; he says,—Oh dear, that hurts my eyes; what is it? Predestination. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he justified; and whom he justified, them he glorified." Another peep;—worse than ever; it hurts my eyes. What is the matter now? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." And so the moles, the owls, and the bats, they come, they see, they hasten away. They cannot say they came, and saw, and conquered; but they came, and saw, and fear took hold upon them, and they hastened away. Their poor bat's eyes are hurt, and away they go, with double the enmity against the light that they had before. But the smallest eaglet, the smallest believer, drinks into his visual orbs this heavenly, this celestial light, that is above the brightness of the sun, with pleasure. Did you ever hear a minister preach a sermon too luminous for you? Is the apostle Paul too luminous for you? Are the prophets too luminous for you? No; you can say with the church of

old, "God is the Lord, who hath showed us light; come let us bind the sacrifice unto the horns of the altar," to denote the certainty of the eternal triumphs of the sacrifice of Christ. The more light the better. "Send out," is the language of the Christian, "thy light and thy truth." But the world are on the dark side of the prophets, they were not brought into the luminous side; and nothing but regeneration can do this. You must be brought over to the free grace side, and then you will see clearly. You see what the prototype is, and you see the circumstances which it is connected with. And will not the antitype answer to it all? Did the Lord then work a great victory? Where is our victory but by the interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ? As the Israelites obtained the victory by this presence of God in the cloud, so we obtain the victory now in the manifestation thereof by the presence of God in the prophets, apostles, and his dear Son. What a good thing it is to understand God's truth, and thereby to have a sweet confidence in God, and for the Holy Ghost to say to us by his servant, "Cast not away your confidence;" oh, hold it fast; do not give way if you can help it to unbelief, or the suggestions of the devil; for if the Lord meant to destroy you, he never would have shown you so far the adaptability of Christ to your necessity as to make him your attraction, and to give you to see that unless he stand between you and your sins there is no hope, and that unless he continue with you and give you the victory there is no hope.

Now there were among the Israelites apostates, but the cloud never left the people all the time they were in the wilderness; it abode with them, showed them the way; and the right-minded never departed from the cloud, for in connection with the cloud was the priest, the priesthood, the mercy-seat, and the presence of God in every respect; in connection with the cloud was the daily manna, the flowing rock, and all the victories we shall presently have to glance at. The cloud never forsook them. And this mystic cloud, this Angel of the covenant, has been with many of you for many years; and have you any desire to forsake it? You know you have not. The more you contemplate the wondrous character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more you love him. I am sure the words are right,—

"If the whole world did Jesus know,"

that is, if they knew him truly,—

"Sure the whole earth must love him too."

It is impossible to know him aright without loving him; and, therefore, if you profess to know him and do not love him, then your knowledge is at fault; it is mere empty knowledge. But if what little you know constrains you to love him, and he stands out as the apple tree amidst the trees of the wood, and the rose of Sharon, then you have that faith that worketh by love, and he will land you safe, as he hath declared unto his servants the prophets; and they all got safe.

Secondly, I notice *the little book that is open*. Now, in this next part, there may be something in your estimation a little fanciful, and yet not fanciful either. This little book is said to be open, and it is connected in this chapter with the cloud. Was there a little book connected with the typical cloud? If there were, may not that be the little book in this chapter connected with the mystical cloud? And if the little book which I will presently bring forward has a spiritual meaning, then in connection with Christ Jesus how beautifully the little book bears upon our welfare. The little book may be divided into two parts; first, declarative of what God had done for his people, and secondly, declarative of what he would do. This little book was open, and to whom? It was not open to the Egyptians, for they were destroyed before it was given; and it was not open to the Canaanites,—they were afar off,—except to my old friend

Rahab, it was open to her. I will just mention one verse of what I may call this little book, declarative of what the Lord had done, and you will see how it will apply to us very nicely when taken in allusion to Christ Jesus the Lord. There we see what the Lord had done. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." There is what he had done, all summed up in that verse. Now let us come to personal experience in this matter; for all these things are intended to be personally understood and realized by the people of God. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth." How, my hearer, did you and I begin to pray? Was it not by that mercy that shewed us our state as sinners? How did we begin to hope? Was it not by that mercy which endureth for ever? And how have we been led forth from time to time? Has it not been by the same mercy? And are we not prepared to say it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed? "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed." If Jesus had not died for us, we ne'er should have felt our need of mercy, we never should have sought it; this mercy never would have reached us; for the redeemed, and the redeemed only, shall return and come to Zion. "Thou hast guided them in thy strength." What beautifully new covenant language this is. It belongs to an unconditional part of the old covenant; it alludes, without any qualification, to the new covenant. In his mercy he remembered us in our low estate. "Thou hast guided them in *thy* strength." Poor Bishop Colenso says, "How in the world could a parcel of infants and children and old people get through the Red Sea?" How could they do so? Well, Bishop, if you will read the chapter you will see, if you have got any eyes at all. "Thou hast guided them in *thy* strength." Why, I would tell the good Bishop,—that is, good of the sort, only not a good sort,—I would tell the good Bishop,—a poor feeble worm that I am, a poor piece of stubble, a poor autumnal leaf, how in the world am I to get to heaven? And the answer is, by the power of God; kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation. "Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation;" referring, no doubt, to the tabernacle, which was not yet actually built, but it was in promise and in purpose. That tabernacle, as well as the temple, was a type of Christ; and God guides us to where he dwells in more senses than one,—he dwells in Christ, and he guides us to Christ; he dwells in the true church, and he guides us to the true children of God; he dwells in heaven, and he will guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory. That is one part of the little book; and it is open too. What do you say to that? Can you say it is open to you? Can you say, that if you were called it was because he remembered you in your low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever? and that if you get to heaven, or that if you get on, it must be by the redemption of Christ, the strength of the Most High, and that you do desire to dwell for ever where he is; yea, that you are already made to love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth. Now I am not saying that I am sure this is the little book; but it is a remarkable thing that there should be a little book connected with this typical cloud, and a little book in this tenth of Revelation connected with an antitypical cloud. Well, Lord, thou hast shown us that part of the little book,—what thou hast done; but what wilt thou do? Well, he says, "The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine." But then, Lord, look at the Edomites. Well, "the dukes of Edom shall be amazed." I will take the strength, and spirit, and conceit out of them. They may just refuse you a little at the first, but by and by they will be glad to let you pass, and glad you are gone. Ah, but then, Lord, there are the mighty men of Moab, and they dwell just on the eastern borders of the land we are going to. As for the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; the

sword, the spear, the shield, shall drop out of their hands, and there they shall stand and totter like a parcel of palsied old women; one of you shall be able to slay a thousand, and half a dozen of you put ten thousand of them to flight. Well, but then, Lord, there are the Canaanites. As to the Canaanites, they are nothing; they shall all melt away, I will take care of that. There is the little book what he will do. See how it clears the path. Ah, the right-minded Israelite would take up the little book and say, Mighty are the impediments between this and the promised land; but here is the little book, reminding me of what the Lord has done, assuring me of what he will do; let me, therefore, in full assurance that all this shall be done cleave unto the Lord my God, and I shall be more than conqueror through him that loved me. But how shall we get over Jordan? "Fear and dread shall fall upon them, by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased." And did it not come to pass just as the Lord said? You are in a position to see that it did come to pass, just as he declared to his servants the prophets; for he had prophets then—Moses and Aaron, Joshua and others; and just as the Lord declared unto them, so it came to pass. And this little book is a whole body of divinity, declaring what God hath done, and what he would do. "Thou shalt bring them in;"—and yet ten croakers came and said, "The cities are walled and very great; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, and we are not able to take the land." Well, who said you were? You are not to get the land in possession by your own arm, nor is your own sword to save you; but Jehovah's arm, and his right hand, and the light of his countenance, because he hath a favour unto you. Believest thou this? If thou dost not, thou shalt not be established; but if thou dost, thou shalt be established, and shalt be as Mount Zion, which never can be removed. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Here then we have the little book; and to everything said in this 10th chapter of Revelation concerning the little book, that little book in the 15th of Exodus from which I have been quoting beautifully answers. This little book was open, and so are these blessed truths open to us—what the Lord has done, and will do. And it was in the angel's hand. What a mercy it was not in the Pope's hands;—he would have put it in the fire long ago; but it is in the angel's hand, to denote that it is the work of Christ to carry out the declarations contained in that little book. Well, John was to eat this book, not literally—it would be ridiculous to the last degree; but he was to receive these things, and sweet it was to receive them. Ah, say you, but bitter afterwards. Never mind, it is worth having a little bitterness for. The Israelites in the wilderness that ate this little book,—that is, received and abode by it,—they were hated and persecuted by the lovers of the flesh pots, the leeks, and onions, and that made themselves captains to go back to Egypt. These persecutors made the lives of the saints of God bitter, but they would not give up the little book for all the bitterness that men could inflict upon them. Therefore the simple meaning is, you receive the truth in the sweetness of it, and then have to suffer for the truth's sake afterwards, in order to put you to the test, to see what sort of metal you are made of. And this little book, an epitome of the whole gospel, was to prophesy again, under the new covenant, to nations, peoples, and tongues. Has it not done so? What is the gospel? Does it not all divide itself into these two parts—what the Lord has done, and what he will do. I have divided the book into two parts, but the Lord divides it, as it were, into three, and so I had better follow the Lord. The Lord said to John,—“Write the things which thou hast seen,—that which is past; and the things which are, and things to come.”