

# A DAY OF REVELATION

## A SERMON

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“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” Genesis 15:18

IN all ages the people of God have had an acquaintance with him which none others ever had, or ever can have; and just so it is now, for there stands the promise that all his children shall be taught of the Lord. And we have in this chapter, through which we shall this evening concisely range, wonderful revelations made direct to Abraham, so that he understood them, and saw in them, if I may so express myself, an infinity of truths; he saw in those revelations all he could desire while he lived, and all he could desire when with him time should be no more.

Our text is rather long, but I shall simply take a twofold view of it; first, *the day of revelation*; secondly, *the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham*.

First, *the day of revelation*. It was a day of wonderful and special revelation to Abraham. The Lord came to him and said, “Fear not.” Of course, under the circumstances, after conquering the kings of the plain, there was, speaking after the manner of men, great danger that the heathen around would rise against Abraham, and come and revenge them and destroy him; so that he was in danger of his life. Therefore, the Lord came in just at that time, and said, “Fear not, Abram;” and the Lord assigned a reason, “I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.” As though the Lord should say, I am not only your eternal life, but I am your shield against that which you fear; and Satan before he can hurt you, men before they can hurt you, circumstances before they can hurt you, must first overcome me; I am your shield, I am your defense; and that, of course, was by the covenant into which he had entered, and in that blessed order of things that will come before us as we go on. This was the revelation made to Abraham, that the Lord would take care of him. And is not this our feeling? Are not our secret thoughts and feelings before the Lord like this? we say, Lord, I feel that without your protection, unless you are pleased to defend me and take care of me, and go with me, it must go ill with me; but if your presence go with me, and you will have mercy upon me; if you will thus defend me, and guide me, and go on from time to time commanding deliverances for Jacob, then I shall do well; and so my prayer will be, “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of your anointed;” just explaining how he is our shield, that it is by Jesus Christ. And then the Lord also said, “I am your exceeding great reward.” Now, how was the Lord Abraham’s reward? Not in a way of merit, but the meaning seems like this; here is Abraham decided for the eternal God, brought into the light of the new, the better, and the everlasting covenant; for though the everlasting covenant, be shadowed forth in the language of our text, yet

the covenant here spoken of immediately refers to the temporal covenant. Abraham, I say, was brought into the light of the better and the everlasting covenant; so that the Lord, by carrying out his sworn promise, was the exceeding great reward of Abraham. One can hardly imagine the peace, and joy, and happiness that Abraham must have been on that day the subject of; God himself in the eternal fulfilment of the sworn promise that he will bless me, in blessing he will bless me; and that includes, of course, everything that everlasting love and almighty power could do. What a happy man he must have been. Well, there is such a thing as being raised up; there is such a thing as coming at least sometimes for a little time into a sweet confidence of the certainty of God's truth, not only generally, but on our own behalf. Why, if he meant to kill us, he would not have shown to us our need of Christ as the way in which he is to defend us. We cannot pray that he would defend us and abide by us on the ground of any good or merit in us; we are to confess what we are, and to plead the Savior's name; and if he meant to destroy us, he would not have brought us thus far, he would not have revealed this unto us. Then again, we are prepared of the Lord to see, though of course we can only see it in a very small measure as yet, the blessed eternity that we shall spend together when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, God himself being our all and in all, and all our springs in him. Why, the greatest achievements of the world are but passing shadows in comparison of this better and enduring substance. The Lord, therefore, might well say, "Fear not." Oh, happy the man who is brought to this understanding of the substitution of Christ, as the way by which the Lord defends us, and becomes our exceeding great reward. Then again, the Lord revealed another thing to Abraham; he gave him to understand the certainty of a numerous spiritual offspring; and he did it in a way that is most wonderfully significant. "He brought him forth in the night," when the stars were appearing, and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall your seed be." Now sometimes, when a great multitude is set forth figuratively, the sands of the sea shore are mentioned; but the sands are not mentioned here, only the stars, "So shall your seed be." Why did the Lord point to the stars? why not have pointed to the sands of the sea shore? For this reason, when the people are spoken of as the sands of the sea shore, that represents them in their fall, degradation, and worthlessness; but now the Lord passes by that and represents the people of God in their dignity; you are aware they are sometimes called stars. Therefore, Abraham saw that not only should their number be so great, but they were compared to the stars to denote their entire independence of man. As God created the stars independent of man, so he creates his people in Christ Jesus independent of the creature altogether. To illustrate this, and see the beauty of it, just look at that beautiful scripture in Isaiah 11, "Who has created these things?" namely, the stars; but the word *things* is not in the original, and it reads better without it; "Who has created these?" And may not the same question apply to the whole of the saved? for they that are saved shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. "That brings out their host by number; he calls them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one fails." So, the revelation thus made to Abraham indicated the independence of the people of everything earthly, indicated their dignity and their certainty; and that is Isaiah's comment upon it, "not one fails." And the Lord, as you know, in Jeremiah, makes use of the ordinances of day and night, the stars, the sun and moon, to illustrate the certainty of his blessed truth. I question whether we have yet arrived altogether at that dignity described by the apostle when he said that God is "abundantly willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel;" for that is the doctrine here; "that we may have strong consolation." I must here use a strong word or two. In the first place, there is not anything under the heavens in ourselves, connected with ourselves, or round about ourselves, that should hinder us from looking with perfect certainty, without a shadow of a doubt, with full

assurance to God, that his promise in our case will be fulfilled. That he will not leave us is not a conjecture, but an unalterable truth; that he will proportion our strength to our day is as sure to come to pass as we exist; and that he will work all the deliverances for us that need will come to pass as sure as we exist; and whatever our trouble be, the Lord is in it all, and will be as sure to appear for us as that we exist. Why, my hearer, if the Lord meant to destroy you, would he have shown you the infinite value of the substitution of Christ? Can you not say, in the sight of a heart searching God that if you are not saved by that positive, unconditional, infallible promise that is sealed by the Mediator's blood, you feel you have such a nature, such a heart, and are such a poor, stumbling creature, and are made so easily to rebel, to doubt and fear, and to be anything but what you would be, that you have no more hope than as though you had to climb to heaven by the ladder of a burning and a fiery law? I like a man to be driven to this. And then is my sin to hinder me? I look with confidence to God for the fulfilment of his promise, and I will thereby plead the Mediator's blood with more decision than ever. Shall my unrighteousness hinder? My unrighteousness shall commend the righteousness of God. Shall my unworthiness hinder? They shall commend the grace of God. Shall my wretchedness and misery hinder? They shall make me cry the louder for mercy and make me feel the more certain that that mercy shall come; for the miserable, the wretched, the cast down, are the objects of his salvation, and mercy, and care. "So shall your seed be." Now Abraham stood there like an iron pillar, by faith I mean, like a defended city and a brazen wall. "He staggered not at the promise through unbelief but gave glory to God." I believe, blessed God, it will be so; I believe that not one will fail; I believe when you take a sinner in hand, and make yourself known to him, that man is as surely saved as that Christ got to heaven, and as that God exists. The wreck and ruin of worlds may come to pass; but not one syllable of the everlasting gospel can ever fail.

Now Abraham believed this, and the Lord counted it to him for righteousness. Why, the Savior might well say, "When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" What is it now in our day? Why, men have faith in almost anything and everything except in this positive promise, except in this certainty of God's truth. Hence a great many who call themselves good men, ministers of the gospel, we are not going to judge them, and say they are not good men; but it is an astonishing thing, if they preach for about half an hour just as we could always wish them, they turn round and almost apologize for it, and bring in a lot of exhortations, and scolding's, and all sorts of things, take the salvation of a sinner entirely out of the hands of God, and put it into the hands of the creature, and tell the sinner he is damned for not accepting that which was never intended for him. This arises from a want of faith in God's truth. When the prophets of old were sent to do anything, they had to do it in God's way. When the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your rod over the sea," suppose Moses had said, Oh, that will not do, Lord; the sea won't care for that; that will not divide the waters; we must adopt some other course, that will never do. What have you to do with that, Moses? You do as I tell you; stretch out your rod over the sea. So, he did. Now when you get through the sea, and come to the burning wilderness, you see that rock there, that granite, flinty rock, for it was a flinty one, the word of God says so, just smite it with your rod, and rivers of water will gush forth. Moses had faith, believed it would be so, did as God told him; the sea divided, the waters came, the enemy was confounded, God glorified; and so, they that thus believed in the Lord did well. What a precious thing, then, is faith. It is said of Abraham that "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness;" as though the Lord should say, Now, Abraham, that is the faith I like; I like you to have faith in me. So, with the woman. Why, if I could just touch his clothes I should be healed; that would do what all the physicians in the world

could not do, for I have tried as many as I could, lost all my money, and no better, but rather worse; but if I could just touch his clothes I should be whole. What! you look at this sin, and that, and the other; and yet you have the daring presumption to say that if you just touch his clothes you will be healed! Oh, you very impious, dangerous, high-doctrine character. And there is another thing, too; you are pressing right through the crowd, and you are diseased, and everyone that you touch will be unclean. Ah, I don't care for any of it; I have heard much of him, I have heard of his forgiving sin, healing diseases, and receiving poor creatures; he came into the world for the very purpose of receiving sinners and saving sinners; and I believe if I could touch his clothes I should be whole; and not only so, but that I should get in connection with temporal blessing a spiritual blessing; and so she did, "O woman, great is your faith."

Then it is added that the Lord said to Abraham, "I am the Lord, that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees." It is a remarkable thing that Abraham should come out from Chaldea, that is, the part of the world that was afterwards literally called Babylon, a type of the mystical Babylon; and just as Abraham came literally from that part, so shall all the people of God come out of the mystic Babylon; and this world, in its hostility to God's truth, is the mystic Babylon out of which the Lord's people come. Now we do not doubt our reconciliation to God's truth, and we do not doubt our real belief of these same blessed truths; but we sometimes say, Have I come to them by the Lord? Is it the Lord that has brought me to them? That is the question that the Christian often feels staggered about. Ah, we say, if I myself have done it, if by listening to the word I have got a little knowledge and light; and by and by it should all go off, and I should be lost at last! The Lord, therefore, to put this right with Abraham, said, "I am the Lord that brought you out;" so that you were obliged to come out, because I brought you out. So, if we are not come ourselves but the Lord has brought us, then we have been forced to come. If you are brought by the Lord, then you have placed your hope in Jesus Christ, in what he is, because you cannot hope in anything else. You are so poor, sinful, wretched, guilty, and lost, that you are necessitated to place your hope in the eternal perfection that is in Christ, and in the yes and amen promise confirmed by him. I make no hesitation in saying that if you can lay your hand upon your breast, and say that necessity has brought you to this, God has given you a will to come to it. And therefore, these two go together; there is a willingness, and there is a deep necessity. And if I were speaking to all the ministers of the various denominations, those that preach a half-way gospel, I would say, Friends, be assured that I do not stand aloof from you from any personal disrespect or prejudice whatever; but as God lives, your gospel is no use to me; I must have a free-grace gospel, I must have a decisive gospel; I must have a faithful and unchanging God; my poverty drives me to this. The man that comes without the Lord bringing him, brings his riches with him, and a good deal of his self-righteousness with him, and brings so many things with him that he does not want much of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the man that the Lord brings leaves it all, because the Lord brings him from necessity, and therefore the Savior, as you are aware, begins the Beatitudes with this very part of your experience: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"In the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram." Well, say you, I think the Lord was very good to Abraham in that day. He was; Abraham never forgot that day, you may be sure. Here then is the shield and great reward; then the certainty of the fulfilment of the promise in the welfare of the people; and then the certainty of the other part. I could linger here, though I must not; but it is a part that the people of God are tried upon. Is it the Lord that has brought me? Perhaps some of you that are here, that gave to our souls a nice testimony on Monday night, were half doubting

before you got home. Satan said, Depend upon it you have been deceiving them and deceiving yourself, and I would not be baptized now, I think you had better unsay what you have said, better undo what you have done, better go back again. Oh, it is a point that the people of God are very much tried upon, and well they might be, for everything turns upon that, because there it stands, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up;" we know that, we feel the solemnity of that. No wonder, therefore, we should be tried upon that point, as to how we came by our religion. So, then the Lord brought Abraham, and Abraham was necessitated, when the Lord revealed his covenant to him, to receive it in the love thereof. It mattered not to Abraham what people thought about it or said about it; the great thing to him was to have God with him, to have God on his side, to be with him in all places whithersoever he should go.

Then secondly, after the Lord had made this revelation to Abraham, he makes a typical revelation. We come now to the temporal and typical. "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" that is, the temporal land, as a type of the eternal inheritance. And then the Lord gives him, in a beautiful way, sacrificial assurance, "Take me an heifer of three years old;" and that heifer is to represent Christ in his spotlessness, as you learn from Numbers 19, where the sacrificial heifer was to be one upon which yoke never came; and Satan's yoke never came upon Christ; he was therefore free from sin. So, then the first part represents Christ in his freedom from sin. "And a she goat of three years old," representing Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh; and a "ram of three years old," representing Christ in his nobleness, for the ram was reckoned a most noble sacrifice under the law; and then "a turtle dove, and a young pigeon," to represent Christ in his meekness. Now what a beautiful representation is here of the atonement of Christ; here he is sinless, here he is in the likeness of sinful flesh; here he is in his nobleness; here he is in his meekness and humility. And these sacrifices were cut in pieces, to represent the intense agonies and sorrows which the dear Savior underwent, as described in Psalm 22, to which I can merely refer, without making any remarks upon it. Do we not read, then, in these typical sacrifices something that infinitely concerns us? Take all four; let us run through them again. First, Jesus Christ was sinless, and by him his people are sinless too; secondly, he took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, that they might be formed into his likeness, and shine in it forever. Thirdly, the nobleness. Is there anything we are acquainted with, next to God himself, so noble as the wondrous atonement of Jesus Christ? Then again, in his humiliation, the turtle-dove and the young pigeon; "I am meek and lowly in heart;" "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." What a blessed sacrifice is this!

There are some very peculiar things in this chapter, and of course all of them have a typical meaning; we shall not altogether pass by the literal, but they have especially a typical meaning. Now, "when the sun was going down" and here is a line of distinction drawn in this chapter between the sun going down and when it was gone down; that we shall come to presently, "when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." This horror of great darkness represents literally the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt, as this chapter explains; but then let us look at its spiritual meaning. When the Lord made me dead to the world, and conviction fell upon my mind, it was a horror indeed. I look back at the horrors I was under; my earthly sun was going down; I thought, Here I am, a sinner, and what is this world to me? what is this life to me? I felt there was nothing under the sun in which I could hope; for I said, I shall soon be in hell. Here my sun was going down; here was a horror of great darkness. And just so it is with every sinner called by grace; so, it was with Saul of Tarsus; his

sun, the false light in which he had been walking, was going down. "And lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him," As I said the other day, in a letter to a Christian friend, tribulations are our teachers, one order of our teachers; by and by they will be removed into a corner, and I shall be glad when they are; and when they are removed into the corner we shall get out of the corner. Our tribulations very often get us into a sort of corner now; nevertheless, they are all good, they are all profitable. You do not profit in hearing the word so well as when you need something. If there be some perplexity in providence, some affliction of body, some darkness of mind, then you listen if there is anything the Lord will bring to suit you; and as there is everything in the word of God that does suit, there is not the possibility of any necessity arising in any way in your circumstances, in your experience in the world, in any way, but what there is something in the word of the Lord to suit it. And oh, when we are in trouble, to have one sweet word from the Lord, the heart is soft and susceptible then; how the tears of love and gratitude will flow. We see sometimes among our fellow-creatures, here is a poor outcast; nobody takes any notice of him, everybody despises him; presently someone, with original charity, I was going to say, with original resolution, steps out from the general treatment the meets with, and sympathizes with him. Why, the man is astounded at that word of sympathy, and knows not how to express his gratitude. Just so the poor sinner, when he is thus cast down or in trouble; he can then say with David, "Make haste to help me, O Lord." I feel as though I should get into desperation; everything seems going wrong. And at the appointed moment, at the suited moment, the Lord will come and bring us out of our trouble. He saw it was needful the trouble should come, and though painful to you at present, yet afterward he will make it yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and you will by and by say,

"I know in all that me befell,  
My Jesus has done all things well."

Then, by and by, when the sun went down, or when it was gone down, "behold a smoking furnace." Now this represents the Israelites in their extremity; and when you get into extremity, that is God's opportunity. But let us take this in the temporal meaning of it, because it will help us to understand the spiritual meaning all the better. Now we read that a king arose that knew not Joseph; that is what I apprehend is meant, that the sun is gone down. Let us try and understand it. Joseph was the representative, in the Egyptian court, of his brethren; and his brethren were protected by the Egyptian Government according to the worth and worthiness of Joseph; and Joseph, therefore, as their representative, was the means of their coming into the best of the land, of their being nourished and kindly treated; and after Joseph's death his memory was kept up, it appears, all through the then present dynasty. But presently the dynasty was changed, and another order of kings came to the throne; and this new dynasty, this new government, does not follow its predecessor in recognizing Joseph, his name is now dropped, so that the Israelites now have no one to represent them in the Egyptian court; the consequence is, that the Egyptian Government holds them as aliens, slaves, and enemies, and begins to oppress them. That was how they came under their oppression; "there arose a king," a dynasty, "that knew not Joseph." When Joseph ceased to be recognized in the court as the representative of his brethren, away went all their comforts, and they were subjected immediately to slavery, wretchedness, and death. Do you not see something shining here, friends? I am sure you must. Ah, you will say, our spiritual Joseph is our representative in the high court of heaven, and our spiritual Joseph will never be forgotten in heaven; there will never arise a new dynasty in heaven; our God reigns forever; and our spiritual

Joseph will never cease to be recognized; our spiritual Joseph will never cease to be the representative of all his brethren; and so while Jesus lives they will be kindly treated, while Jesus lives they will be taken care of, while Jesus lives they will be dealt with according to the worth and worthiness of their spiritual Joseph, who represents them in the high court of heaven And the Savior seems almost to quote from this very representation when he says, "Because I live, you shall live also." Take our spiritual Joseph away, and let his name be out of the question; let the Lord come and say, I know not this spiritual Joseph; how shall we be dealt with then? Why, as aliens, as enemies, and must be cursed to the lowest hell. Thanks, infinite and eternal, that we have thus a representative that is God as well as man, who lives to eternity, who shall represent the children of Jacob forever; of his representative character and of his kingdom there shall be no end. So, then, our sun will never go down; he is the Sun of righteousness risen to set no more forever. Oh, my hearer, when your soul that has already come through a thousand hells, pretty well, when it does by and by leap out of mortality into the presence of the dear, covenant God, what will your joy be, what will your rapture be, when you see the man, the God, that bled for you? Here, then, our heavenly Joseph will never forget us, and it is by him the Lord said, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of me."

Now when this sun was gone down, when Joseph's name ceased to be recognized in the Egyptian court, then there was a smoking furnace, very often called an iron furnace, the smoking furnace representing the great sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt. But notice something else; just as they, got to the worst there was a lamp; "a burning lamp that passed between those pieces;" and this burning lamp passing between those pieces represented literally the salvation from Egypt by sacrifice. Now here is 430 years before it took place, and the salvation from Egypt is represented by sacrifice, for the burning lamp passed between those pieces; and you know that the Paschal Lamb was the way by which they set out, and the way in which the lamp of salvation passed by; the way in which the Lord gave them the victory. And what does this lamp show? If you want to get the spiritual meaning of this lamp, what it shows, you have nothing to do but just go to Isaiah 62, where you read, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns." And what shall be the effect? "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory." not earthly kings, but spiritual kings. Ah, say some, you know all kings by and by are to see the Lord's glory. My hearer, the glory there is Christ's salvation; for what in the 1st verse is called "salvation" is in the 2nd verse called "glory." Why, a king cannot see that because he is a king but can see it because I am a spiritual king, for the Lord has made a spiritual king of me; he has given me heavenly eyes, a heavenly mind, heavenly glory; and therefore, as a spiritual king I can see this glory and rejoice in it. Such then is the lamp, and this lamp appeared when the sun was gone down. How expressive it is, is it not? Just as every particle of confidence in the flesh is taken away, and your sun of self-righteousness is gone down, that will bring out the light of the lamp of eternal salvation. And this burning lamp went forth just at the time when it was needed; the Lord knows when to show us his light.

Lastly, I notice *the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham*. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Now this is the literal land, but this land, from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, the Israelites never possessed; they never received it; no, not even in the days of David or Solomon. Well, then, what is to be done? There are two things the learned

tell us, and I have got my view. Dr. Keith, for instance, says that they never did possess this land to its full extent; he says, it is an indisputable proof that the Jews will by and by return, and possess all the land that God promised; they have not possessed it yet, and therefore, will by and by return to the land and possess it. That is his view. Then another learned man says, No, that won't do; and then I come in and say neither of them will do. This other learned man says we must understand it rhetorically; that it is a mere rhetorical representation, in order to represent the land of Canaan as occupying a sort of central position between the river Euphrates and the river Nile in Egypt. Well, I do not feel satisfied with that either. My opinion is this, that that covenant was conditional, many parts of it at least conditional; and when the Israelites got into the land of Canaan, if they had abode by their God, and by the covenant into which he had brought them, then they would have possessed all that God had promised; because they were to acquire it on the condition that they were to have no other gods but him. But instead of abiding by his covenant, they forsook it, and entered into a covenant with the heathen around; they threw down his altars and killed his prophets. What was the consequence? They were brought into bondage from time to time; and so far from keeping the whole extent of the land, they, as early as the days of Hezekiah, lost all the northern part of Canaan, and the ten tribes were swept away. They did not carry out the conditions of the covenant; if they had, they might have possessed all the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. That is how I understand it, and with that explanation I am satisfied; because it is clear to all that they did lose the land bit by bit and part by part, until they lost the whole; and it was by forsaking God's covenant, going into covenant with the people around, and worshipping their gods; that is the way they lost it; though the conditions are not here named, yet they are in other places. Well, then, say you, what is to become of the promise? In conclusion let me say that this scripture spiritually is carried out beautifully by one that did carry out the conditions of another covenant. Let the river of Egypt represent Egypt; let Egypt represent the world, the house of bondage; let the great river Euphrates represent Babylon mystically; and these were two places where the Israelites were in captivity. Egypt represents the world, and Babylon represents the world; Jesus Christ comes in, he has power over all flesh, and so he brings his people out of the Egypt of this world, out of the Babylon of this world, and brings them into a better country. So that he possesses all the land, carries out the spiritual meaning, delivers all his people from captivity, and then he brings them into a better land where they can come short of nothing. Oh, it is a privilege to understand the distinction between the two covenants; the one was temporal, the other is eternal.

May the Lord lead us into these dear mysteries, give us more faith and more love, for his name's sake. Amen.