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**COVENANT RENEWAL AND THE  
TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

**Excerpts of a conference by T. Austin-Sparks  
and editorial comments**

**Part 2**

# **COVENANT RENEWAL AND THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

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BY THE CHURCH

## Preface

In this publication the editors have chosen to take excerpts from a conference held in Kilcreggan in August 1933 by T. Austin-Sparks and combine these with editorial comments on the Biblical texts that were used during this conference — mainly the book of Jeremiah — and some historical context. The reason for this approach is that the editors did not find the manuscript suitable for publication as a whole, but thought many of its passages were precious and edifying for the church.

This issue contains chapters three, four and five of a total of eleven chapters. The quotations from the conference manuscript are marked with “...” and a sans serif type face is used. The editorial parts are marked with [Ed.].

## THE PASSOVER ISSUE

*Reading: 2 Kings 22:8; 23:1-3,21; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:16; 11:28; 13:20,21.*

“The two passages which we have read from the Old Testament bring us back to that with which the Lord has been engaging us so far, and bring before us one outstanding factor and feature of this ministry of the prophet Jeremiah which, as we have been seeing, has a very clear message for our own time. We said in chapter one in this connection that when Josiah, seeking to fulfil his reforms, called this great national gathering for a celebration of the Passover — and in a sense it was a good thing, and the Word of God makes it quite clear that there was a divine recognition of its value, there was divine approbation — yet Jeremiah had some reservations about it.”

[Ed.] What is on T. Austin-Sparks’ heart is that the Lord may bring about a ministry within the church like Jeremiah’s ministry, that is, a call to covenant renewal and, of course, a genuine response from God’s people to that call in seeking to represent His Kingdom here and now in the fullest possible way; in other words, a true testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in anticipation of His return.

Exactly that, covenant renewal, is what is taking place during king Josiah’s reign, but with a big “but”. T. Austin-Sparks is now going to dig deep into the underlying layers of the reservations God Himself had about these days of reform. He argues that in spite of radical reform God is still not satisfied because of a discrepancy between the observance of the Passover and every-

day life. The behaviour of the people of God shows that, in general, they do not seem to grasp the spiritual meaning of the Passover, which is the very heart of the covenant.

Although Jeremiah is not mentioned in 2 Kings 22 and 23, we know he was around when Josiah reinstated the Passover and that he had already been active as a prophet for some years. He has an indignant speech in which he mentions the twenty-three years he has been preaching (see Jer. 25), a period that includes the time of Josiah's reform and the Passover reinstallation. And indeed, again and again Jeremiah reminded his hearers that YHWH is the God who brought the Israelites up from the land of Egypt (2:6; 7:22,25; 11:4,7; 16:14; 23:7; 31:32). The covenant of God with the people of Israel is based on the blood of the Passover lamb. When Moses proclaims the covenant for the new generation that is about to enter the promised land, he starts by saying, "I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This is why T. Austin-Sparks views the Passover to be such an important issue and a sore point in the days of Josiah's reform. What are the implications for us in this matter?

“Jeremiah was not wholeheartedly in it. He had doubts. And he was justified, and this very chapter in the second book of Kings gives you the justification for Jeremiah's attitude. He might have been regarded as a very awkward fellow. It is so when there seems to be a real movement, something along the line of revival, and certain people do not find themselves carried away by it but have doubts or questions, they are usually regarded as very awkward people, ...”

[Ed.] The author continues to say that Jeremiah was one of those who had a keener and clearer spiritual sensibility than some who, genuinely and enthusiastically, joined Josiah's reformation.

“You notice that although there was this celebration of the Passover, this national movement apparently, and that it says that there was not such a Passover from the days of the Judges onwards, when you get to verse twenty-six you have a word which pulls you

up short and shows you the ground of Jeremiah's reservation:

*"Notwithstanding, YHWH turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked him" (2 Kings 23:26).*

That great "Notwithstanding" of verse twenty-six is Jeremiah's ground of uncertainty, of doubt about this apparently good and genuine movement. He was not carried away by it. Why? To answer the question is to bring us once more right into the presence of the situation which has to be met, faced, faithfully dealt with, testified against, and in the midst of which the ministry of such a vessel as is represented by Jeremiah has to be fulfilled. It is the Passover which is the climax of this movement. Josiah doubtless was genuine and meant it, but it seems perfectly clear from the fact that the Lord did not accept it on the part of the people as a genuine heart movement. The Lord did not turn away from the fierceness of His great wrath: that clearly implies that Jeremiah had insight into the meaning of the Passover which was not the meaning that the people had when they observed it on that occasion. Jeremiah had spiritual perception that pierced through this formality, this ceremonialism, this outward observation of things. And may we not say that that also represents a principle, a law which must govern the ministry of any instrument which is called by God to recover for Him the fulness of His testimony? An insight, a spiritual perception that cleaves a way right through all the professionalism, externalism, ceremonialism, formalism of things which claim to represent the Lord but which at heart are far from the Lord, and sees where all this begins and where it ends, and recognises that it does not go all the way with the Lord. Spiritual perception as to the real measure of depth and value of profession, and what is not an assumed or professed representation of the Lord's interests. That spiritual perception is intensely valuable to the Lord; it is essential for His purpose, but

it is a tremendously costly thing to the person who has it. It is a painful thing to have spiritual perception. Jeremiah found that his spiritual perception got him into trouble all along the way.”

[Ed.] Everything seemed to be in God’s plan: a king on David’s throne, Jerusalem and the temple. To criticise these sacred institutions was blasphemy. That the Northern Kingdom had been taken over by the Assyrians and later by Egypt may even have strengthened the people in the South in their idea that God was still with them. What happened to the Northern Kingdom was considered only a confirmation that such a disaster would never happen to them. It was a challenge, therefore, to remain open for the voice of God and trust that the prophet’s message was ultimately for the good of the Lord’s people and for the advance of God’s purposes. Once there is distrust the case is lost. Leaders who claim to be divinely appointed, will start to insist on conformity instead of unity, which will result in polarization. All criticism must be silenced.

But even when the disaster did come (see chapters 39 to 44) and Jeremiah was vindicated, the hearts of the people were not open and willing to listen to God. Of course there was fear and panic. That did not help. But idolatry was so prevalent among the people that it did not even occur to them that their terrible situation was related to their idolatry. If God had now cursed the land, well, they thought, they had to go somewhere else! But this shocking report of the terrible spiritual state of the remnant of Judah would later reach the exiles in Babylon, convince their hearts and move some to repentance. Some would begin to understand that a drastic change of heart was needed. To be in exile was God’s severe measure, but it was His grace at the same time.

“Now Jeremiah’s was not a temperamental or constitutional cynicism, not because he was made on that pattern, that he was naturally one who could never be satisfied with anything. There are plenty like that. It does not matter what there is, they will always see its flaws, always be dissatisfied. Those people can never do anything very much. Theirs is always a critical and destructive attitude towards the best there is. Jeremiah is a man who is far too deeply stricken of heart to be a man like that. Jeremiah would

have only been too glad to have found something that did genuinely represent the Lord. Read the beginning of chapter nine: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" He is not a man who is not looking for the best and rejoicing in it if he finds it. But it was something extra to himself, this spiritual perception, and it cost him great sorrow — not criticism but sorrow. There is a great deal of difference between that pouring out of critical judgments, a censoriousness of attitude, a discontented spirit with everything. The fault-finding make-up which leads to volumes of words which are all withering even of the best; there is a great deal of difference between that, and a man whose heart is broken over spiritual things and who would rejoice if he found anything of the Lord. He has to pour out a broken heart because he sees so very little even with his keen spiritual perception, of that which is according to what the Lord has made known to him as His thought and idea. Let us keep these two things widely apart beloved, and ask the Lord to save us from the one; and if we are to be of use to Him we must be prepared to pay the price of the other. It costs nothing to criticise. It costs nothing to take the attitude of always seeing the faults and the flaws. It does cost something to have spiritual perception and to see with the eyes of God, the difference between what professes to be, and what genuinely is according to the Lord. That is a feature of a vessel that is to be of use to the Lord. Let me say that the critical vessel is no good to God. It will be kept out so far as divine anointing is concerned. The anointing will not be upon that; it will have no ministry. Its whole influence will be death, and the Lord will not come by His Spirit upon a merely critical line of things. But there is the other side where the Lord opens the eyes of the heart and the heart becomes pained by what it sees, the real spiritual state; and when the heart comes into that vision and suffers then there is a fellowship with God. I believe the sufferings of the Lord Jesus into which we are called to share are not the sufferings of His vicarious sacrifice: they are the sufferings of the heart over spiritual things. Well now, Jeremiah with his spiritual



insight saw the real meaning of the Passover and what the people meant, or did not mean when they celebrated it on this occasion.

And we want briefly to dwell upon the meaning of the Passover and we shall see all the rest in the light of that. The Passover, as you know, was instituted with Israel's exodus from Egypt recorded in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus, and it was a link with the past. It was the bringing of the corporate company of God's people on to covenant ground through an act of individual responsibility and deep experience. Bringing the corporate people on to covenant ground linked them with the covenant made to Abram. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. That was an individual thing with Abraham. That is where it commenced. Now Israel, as a corporate company is being brought on to the ground of the covenant made with Abraham, and the sign of the covenant made with Abraham, which was circumcision, is now going to be the sign for the corporate company, and you will notice that the symbolism is the encircling of blood. The taking of the blood shed and sprinkling it upon the lintel above, upon the two side posts, and there it is upon the very threshold because the lamb has been slain and the blood has been poured out upon the threshold. So that what you have is the complete circle of blood, the sign, the symbol of the covenant, and everyone that passes in or out can only do so by going through an encircling of blood. The apostle explains that spiritually to us in the letter to the Colossians: "... the putting off of the body of the flesh". When the whole body of the flesh is put away there is no ground for a plague or death. It is the covenant in life by the blood on the ground that the body of the flesh has been put away, has been cut off, and this blood abides as a testimony to the fact that there has been a cutting off and a putting away, and the enemy has no power, death has no power. The corporate company had to come on to that ground where typically, the whole body of the flesh was put away, to rob Egypt of Egypt's power, that is the devil of his power to enslave, to rob death of its power to lay low. So the Passover, in the first place, was bringing the Lord's people as one body on to covenant ground, and the covenant ground is where the flesh has ceased to

operate, has been put away. There is a very great deal of course, of the Word of God and of truth bound up with that simple statement. We have embraced the whole history of Abraham, really the whole history of Israel, the whole history of the spiritual seed; we embrace the letter to the Romans, and the history of the church; but there is the simple foundation, and yet how far-reaching it is. The corporate company are brought into the same position as Abraham was brought into in covenant relationship with God.

And then we said it is by an act of individual responsibility. It is true that the whole Body of Christ as the corporate company was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and the whole Body was brought into the covenant of His blood when that blood was shed. In the initial testimony of the Lord's Table in the upper room, when Judas had gone out, all the Body was represented in the eleven; the twelfth was in God's mind. You get in the end, the book of Revelation; the whole city stands on the foundations of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The whole Body is represented in the first company around the Lord's Table, it is true, but while the election is inclusive and timeless, and while the whole company to the last unit is in the divine sovereignty and election gathered into the very first nucleus, it is represented there and God sees the whole. At the same time every individual has a responsibility and the collective and corporate never does away with the individual responsibility. We can never hide from personal responsibility in the Body of Christ in the collective thing. And so every individual in Israel that night had to commit himself to an act of personal responsibility in relation to a corporate whole. They had to take every man the blood, and every individual had to be brought under that blood as though they were the only one in the whole world. You and I, to come into the good of the covenant, have to come to the place where in the circumcision of Christ our flesh is put away.

It is not a question of whether So-and-So's flesh is put away. Is *our* flesh put away? It is not a question of how many other Christians are still allowing the flesh to have its way. It is a question of, am I in the flesh? To put away our flesh is an act of personal respon-

sibility. Let me emphasize for my own sake as well as yours, that you and I individually and personally must seek (whatever others do, or are,) to live truly according to the meaning of the cross of the Lord Jesus. And it is a very delightful thing to see those who hold higher positions in the Lord's work, those who are expected to show very much more of the Spirit of Christ, exemplify the meaning of the cross towards those of the Lord's people who might have in the natural realm a provoking, annoying or upsetting character. It is not whether others, of whom we have a right to expect something better, are what we think they should be or not; it is, after all, am *I* in that? Am *I* living according to the message? And the Lord knows the secret history of each heart. The Lord knows when you have met something and you have to get away to your room and have a real good fight to get on top of it so that you will not let your Lord down. He knows when you take individual responsibility for the whole testimony. Do not let the standard of any other person be your standard, unless it is a higher one than you have. Make it a matter of individual responsibility before the Lord, because it is only as that is so that the whole Body will come into its place. We must remember that while the Lord reigns, the responsibility is upon each member individually. The full realization of His purpose rests with the Body and our personal battle in the secret place where we have to gulp and swallow very hard because of something we have met, where frankly we ought to have met something very much more of Christ. That secret battle, beloved, does affect the Body of Christ; it means a great deal to the whole company. We have to take personal responsibility in that way. Sooner or later we have to come to the place where we have no argument with the Lord that other people do not come up to the standard. The Lord's argument will be, what about *you*? By an act of individual responsibility, then through deep experience. What I mean by that clause in this general statement is, that the bondage of Egypt, the refusal of the Egyptians to allow God's firstborn to go free, meant a very great deal of deep experience for the Lord's people.

We have said before that the long-drawn-out controversy of

the Lord through the nine plagues on top of four hundred years of bondage, suffering, oppression, must have been a severe test to their faith. The four hundred years must have beaten them down and made them an almost submerged people with very little hope. I expect we would have found them a people with very little hope in their hearts and on their faces. We know when we meet people who have had a long history of suffering and oppression, that they have been under a strength too great for them; they carry with them the very spirit of oppression. Now on top of that there are these plagues, these judgments. One — and perhaps a little hope rises. It fails. If there was hope, then there is very little left. Then two. It fails, and their faith is again smitten a blow. Three — and they dare to hope that perhaps this may succeed when the others have failed. Failure again. And I venture to think that if we had gone through that ordeal nine times there would have been very little confidence left in us. We should say: the Lord does do some strange things; it seems as if He is incapable of carrying this thing through. It was a very deep trial. Now you understand why, in the letter to the Hebrews it says: "By faith he instituted the Passover." Those mighty four hundred years of oppression, nine plagues and judgments unavailing, and then he instituted the Passover! That is faith, because this Passover is going to be God's way out and God says that the thing is going to succeed. We had expected each one of those nine occasions would be the way out, every time we thought it would be the result, but what is the use of trying again? What is the use of believing any more? Quite easily the heart of the natural man could have said: Well, I do not believe it will be any more successful than the rest; why not resign ourselves to our fate? "By faith he instituted the Passover." It was through deep experience, trial of faith, testing, that they came at last to take that blood. After all every man did it. It was an individual act of faith in spite of the history which had been so discouraging. True, it says that Moses instituted it, but everyone had to come into that act of faith and take their place with Moses that night. Through deep trial.

Well, with that very first fragment we are beginning to under-

stand Jeremiah. We are beginning to see I think, a gleam of light. Why did Jeremiah not go along wholeheartedly with this celebration of the Passover? Because he saw there was nothing in it; that it was but an outward thing, and there was no real heart movement Godwards in faith. There was no uprising of heart to God in spite of a very great movement believing in God. Jeremiah saw that this was lacking and he could not go along with the thing. He saw the Passover represented something, the whole company came on to covenant ground by an individual responsibility through deep exercise of heart, and none of that was there in the days of Josiah. The Passover has something very deep in it, very real, very genuine. What Jeremiah is after is not to get a formal performance of this thing, but to get the heart-state which is suitable to this thing, and so a Jeremiah ministry must always have an insight which is able to recognise whether the thing is only a bit of formal performance, or whether the thing is genuine heart-exercise, and which makes always for the latter and can never be satisfied with the former. That will bring you right into direct collision with the whole system of formal Christianity, and that is what happened with Jeremiah. It means sooner or later the leaders of the Christian order will put you in a pit, metaphorically speaking. You will find yourself put in a dungeon, in a place of exclusion, of difficulty, trial, adversity, by the very leaders themselves if you are going to stand for that which the Passover really represents.

That is only the first bit of it, you see. Now in the Passover, which is recorded for the first time in Exodus twelve, we have the details of God's covenant and of what God's covenant means. First of all God, the Lord, commands the choice. Man does not initiate this thing. This is no thought of man. Its explanation is not in man's mind. It comes from the Lord, and the Lord has a much larger mind about this thing than we know of. When the Lord commands a thing, or says a thing, there is a whole universe of meaning in His mind bound up with a simple command. "Take ... a lamb." Get back with Israel in Egypt on that day and just have a simple command. "Take ... a lamb." They may know something about sacrifices which

were offered by some of their fathers, Abraham, Noah, Abel. They may have some light on the thing. But it is quite clear that they had very imperfect light about it. We today are so familiar with the content of the meaning of that lamb that it is difficult for us to put ourselves in that position. But with all that we know, with all that the New Testament brings to our knowledge in the clear statement: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world", and right up to the glory of the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, we do not know one hundredth part of the content of that. Why, as I get down with these matters and meditate upon the blood of the Lamb, and upon the Lamb of God, I begin to be conscious of a range of meaning that has never yet broken upon us. It is all there, and my heart says: Oh, if only I could get hold of it and bring it here and define it for myself and the Lord's people, those ranges far beyond the greatest measure of detection but all that is known of God. It will take the universe for its full expression and eternity to make it clear. This thing comes from God and it has God's meaning in it. I say that for this reason. You cannot take a thing on the face of it as these people did in the days of Josiah, as a fragment of history, something out of a book, a manual, or because it is in the Bible, there it is and you take it and observe it and think you have made it part of your life. No, there is a spiritual greatness about this thing which if missed, makes even the things of the Word of God merely empty performances. It is so easy, and it is done over a wide area — to take the Bible just as it is and try to put into operation just what it says — and you have a mechanical system without life. You must understand God's meaning, the spiritual interpretation of those things. You can have the Lord's Table, our present form of the Passover, and the Bible says to do it. Well, let us have some bread and wine, say some prayers, distribute these things in a reverential mood, feel worshipful while we are doing it, sing a hymn and go home; and do the same next week. But get into the heart of that thing spiritually, let any of its deeper meaning break upon us here by the power of the Holy Spirit and you have another thing entirely. One is the ordinance, the other a testimony. One is

a ceremony, the other is a life. We must come into God's point of view. We must be with God in this. It must not be man's doing, it originates with the Lord, with His own meaning, and we can never take a thing which comes from the Lord and put it mechanically into operation. We must see what it is the Lord meant by this. That is what the people did not do in Josiah's day. If they had stopped for that and entered into that Jeremiah might have had occasion to go with them. That represents the nature of his ministry, and the nature of the ministry of any instrument raised up to bring back the Lord's meaning of things. It commenced with the Lord. The Lord commanded the choice.

"Your lamb shall be without blemish." A lamb without blemish, a male of the first year. This lamb was typical in its qualities and representative in its selection. You have two sides. You have on the one side the selection of the lamb, and on the other side the qualities of the lamb. Its qualities were typical of Christ. It represented the moral excellences of the Lord Jesus: without blemish. The very symbol of innocence. It was representative in its choice. If Israel had kept within the limits of that we would have had a very different story to tell. Can you see how the spiritual apprehension of the meaning of that lamb as typical in its qualities and representative in its choice would stand in the most emphatic, definite opposition to the idolatry of Israel? Idolatry as we defined it — anything and everything that is against the utterness of the Lord as the life of His people. That lamb speaks of that, the Lord the very life of His people. The lamb the bread; the wine the blood. The utterness of Christ unto God. The utterness of Christ from God, to be our life. We know what He teaches us about Himself as the very Life of His people. His body, He Himself given to God.

We read from Hebrews 10 — do you notice the context of the verse which we read? It has to do with that one offering to God for ever by which the will of God was perfected, and then it leads on to this: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16, AV). That leads us on to

chapter 13:20,21: "... the blood of an eternal covenant ... make you perfect in every good thing to do his will." Follow that back and you will see by the offering of Himself to God, the setting aside of the Jewish sacrifices saying: "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will." In the offering of Himself the will of God is perfected in the outpouring of His life wholly unto God; then: "... the blood of the eternal covenant ... make you perfect in every good thing to do his will ...". Well, that sets Israel at a great disadvantage in the days of Jeremiah. The blood of the covenant, which is the blood of the Passover, the blood of the Lamb, is that which brings us right into direct line with the perfect will of God. In Christ I "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight". That is the meaning of the covenant, the meaning of the blood of the Lamb, the meaning of the Passover. Jeremiah saw nothing of that. He did not see the will of God being done. He did not see them being made perfect in every good thing to do His will. He saw but an outward thing.

I have been seeking in this chapter to get at one clear line. All that we have been seeing by all this material is intended to bring us to this one point. This is that an instrument according to the Jeremiah standard, to be used by God in relation to the testimony which satisfies His heart, must have clear perception of the spiritual value of things, and never be satisfied with the merely external and formal profession of things. Such a person must also be prepared to meet the impact of dislike and refusal on the part of the merely formal order of things when it takes up its position to stand for what alone will satisfy God's heart. I believe that that is what the Lord wants to say to us. My way of putting it may be a difficult way but you will see the direction of things I am sure. You will get the general drift if you do not get the actual thought. I do feel we are here in relation to something of value to Him and that He would have all of us wherever we are, standing for Him on this earth for a pure testimony, for a whole testimony. If we are going to do that



of course we are going to meet a very great deal of antagonism as Jeremiah did, but nevertheless the Lord through that testimony will get a vessel in which that testimony is fully represented.”

## THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

*Reading:*

*2 Kings 23:21*

*Jeremiah 31:31*

*Hebrews 10:16; 11:28; 13:20.*

*(Exodus 4:20-26; Col. 2:11).*

*Genesis 17:2,7-9,10,11,13; 15:6.*

*Romans 4:3*

*Galatians 3:16*

*James 2:23*

“Our basic passages are Hebrews 13:20 and Colossians 2:11 and they give us the key. Let us just remind ourselves of the passage in Hebrews 13:20 “... the blood of the eternal covenant”. Now let us first have a word or two of retrospect.

We have been considering the place and the purpose of the ministry of Jeremiah, and in so doing we have seen that it relates to three things:

- 1) to the state of departure and declension among the Lord’s people through idolatry;
- 2) to the crises which must surely come as a consequence;
- 3) to the recovery of the testimony in a remnant.

Those three things summarize the ministry of Jeremiah and the purpose for which he was raised up by God. And the point which we reached was his reservation in connection with the Pass-over which king Josiah instituted. We saw that Jeremiah had quite distinct doubts about the spiritual reality of that celebration of the

Passover. This reservation we also saw was due to spiritual insight, a necessary faculty and qualification for any such ministry as that fulfilled by Jeremiah, the recovery of the Lord's testimony in a time of declension. And this spiritual insight accorded with God's own attitude. 2 Kings 23:26 shows that the Lord was not wholly satisfied with what was taking place and did not turn away from the fierceness of His wrath. Further, the nature of this insight saw that it was an outward thing without an adequate inward reality. And then we went on to see the inner meaning of the Passover from God's standpoint, that is, the spiritual principles behind the Passover which are abiding, which are not merely of time but of eternity. Now that carries us up to the point where we are able to resume that consideration. You will remember in the previous chapter that we were in Exodus 12, where the Passover was instituted and we went through the first six phases of the Passover: —

- 1) The Lord commanding the choice
- 2) A lamb
- 3) Without blemish
- 4) A male
- 5) Of the first year
- 6) The blood to be sprinkled on the two side posts and on the lintel of every house. That is, above and alongside every passer through the door.

We saw this Passover lamb was typical, a type of Christ in its qualities and representative in its selection. Now there is a seventh point which gives us our next movement, and that is, the Lord's declaration in connection with this Passover and the sprinkling of blood. "... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." "When I see the blood that is the token of My covenant with Abraham, there shall be no plague upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." And immediately we ask, Why this? Why no plague? Why no destruction? Why, seeing the blood does the Lord pass over? And the answer to that enquiry is found in the whole teaching of the Word concerning blood. That is, as to

its significance; and then as to the signs of the covenant such as circumcision.

It is quite impossible for the most superficial, casual reading of the Word of God, to fail to bring a very strong recognition of the prominence of blood right from Genesis to Revelation, and then parallel with that, the sacredness of blood everywhere in the Word of the Lord. The sacredness of the blood is because it is declared to be the life, the soul, and it is shown that the life is never destroyed even when the blood is shed and poured out, or poured forth. Abel's blood still speaks after it is shed. It is regarded as still having living qualities even after it is separated from the organism which it has vitalized. Noah, when the flood has subsided and he has emerged from the ark, erects an altar, sheds blood, and offers a sacrifice, and in the shedding of that blood he symbolically revivifies a dead world; that is, he puts the world that has been under judgment and death upon a basis of new life, resurrection life, in the shedding of that blood. The blood shed is a token or symbol of a resurrected world, or of a revived creation. The principle is the principle of life in the blood.

Moreover, the blood is always regarded as the nature containing the essential elements, constituents of the nature of the being. If you and I could exchange our whole blood system we should be changing our personalities very largely; you would in a very large sense become me and I should become you. That fact lies behind the whole teaching of the Word of God about blood. Blood is regarded as the nature.

It is a very striking thing that in Genesis 9:3-6 the prohibition to drink blood is linked with this statement: "... for in the image of God made he man." This is profound; it is tremendously significant. When God forbids the drinking of blood He attaches to that forbidding: "... for in the image of God made he man". There is a principle there we need to get hold of. (Jeremiah is leading us into a very important realm and we have to follow the way of life, and if we find Jeremiah is leading us into ways we did not anticipate we must go that way and not worry about missing what is in the

book of Jeremiah.) The blood of the eternal covenant should hold us throughout our lives.

Before we go into the matter of the blood more fully, let us notice the eighth point in the Passover, and that has to do with the flesh of the lamb; and what is said about the flesh of the Passover lamb is that it was to be eaten reverently, and in the light of more of the Word of God, the eating of the flesh of the lamb in a reverential manner indicated intercommunion which the covenant secures, the intercommunion which is entered into in the covenant. To that we shall come back again; we mention it as the eighth point in the Passover. Remember that what we are seeking to do is to understand the spiritual meaning of the Passover in order to see what it is that the Lord is seeking to have in His people, which was not seen by Jeremiah in the people even though they performed the feast of the Passover.

Now let us summarize.

This Passover and its meaning was to become the abiding testimony of the people of God. In conjunction with the institution of the Passover as the ground of the blood relationship between Jehovah and Israel, the Lord declared: "And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes ..." (see Exodus 13:11-16). It was the sign of the covenant, and even to this day phylacteries are worn by Jews as signs of their covenant with YHWH. That is their side. There is the divine side. The divine side of this is in such passages as Isaiah 49:16: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." They wore the phylactery upon their arms, the armllet; the Lord says He wears them upon the palms of His hands. There are the two sides of the covenant you see. Then again in Isaiah 62:8: "The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy grain to be food for thine enemies; and foreigners shall not drink thy new wine ...". Swearing by the right hand is a declaration of the honour of God. The right hand is always the place of strength and honour. That is why the Lord Jesus occupies the place at the right hand of God; and the Lord swears

by His right hand, by His honour. It is connected with the covenant. He has sealed the covenant, and the covenant is brought in here as representing the divine side of things, while the human side was the phylactery.

Now let us look at the blood again. We remember its sacredness, how all the way through the Lord stresses the sacredness of the blood because, firstly, it is the life, and that is God's always. It is never in the hands of man. That is in God's hands. If there is judicial judgment in relation to man's life it has to come according to God's will very directly into line with things which affect the moral government of this universe. It is the life. And this life principle represents the nature, the image. And it is this thing which is the basis of the covenant. (If you will be very patient with the technical for a little while we shall be getting to the spiritual values very shortly). The blood, and its sacredness because it is the life, and this life principle represents the nature, and this nature is the basis of the covenant. Therefore, if we work backwards we have this. The covenant is: —

- 1) intercommunion between man and God;
- 2) fellowship between man and God, and God and man;
- 3) sharing of nature between man and God, and God and man;
- 4) sharing of life between God and man, and man and God;
- 5) (which was our starting point) It is all then very sacred.

Can you trace now the features of the covenant? We will just go over that again. The covenant is intercommunion between God and man, man and God. That, of course, comes last: we are working backwards now. That is what the covenant issues in. That intercommunion is on a basis of fellowship between the two, and that fellowship is on a basis of nature, the sharing of nature, and that nature is the very life; the life is that nature and the nature is the life; and that life which contains the nature and the fellowship and the intercommunion is therefore very sacred, and when the blood represents and embodies all that, we are able to understand why the blood is regarded as so sacred everywhere.

You see those five things form the constituents, the components of the covenant. The covenant is that which brings two parties

together in absolute oneness, but not oneness of a legal agreement, not just oneness which is based upon some written understanding. No! A oneness in very life, in very being. That is the meaning of the covenant and the blood of the everlasting covenant contains that.

Now do you see where that leads you? That leads you to the Lord Jesus whose blood it is pre-eminently. All the way up to Him man was forbidden to drink blood. Immediately He comes He says: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This thing has been reserved through the ages in relation to One and only One; His blood alone can be taken, can be received, and it is His blood that contains all these elements of the covenant. How do we have intercommunion with God? How do we have fellowship with God? How do we share the nature of God? How do we partake of the very life of God? By the Lord Jesus dwelling within. You see the nature of the Incarnation? What is Christ? He is Very God and Very Man brought together in One Person. He is all that God is, and He is all that man is according to God (not fallen man); He is the humanity that God intended humanity to be. Those two utterances of God and man are so interwoven into One Person that you cannot divide between them; they flow in and over one another. You may define the difference between the work of the Son of man and the work of the Son of God, but you cannot draw a line between the Person: they are One. Now what has happened? When we take the blood of the Lord Jesus, we take symbolically His very life, His very nature; that which is in Him by the Holy Spirit enters into us. It does not become us. This is where a great deal of error has come into Christian teaching. We do not become God and God does not become us, but God in Christ, in perfect humanity and in divine nature, by the Holy Spirit takes up residence within our renewed spirits. How do we have this oneness with God? The oneness with God is by reason of God and man being joined together in our hearts. It is not us: it is Christ in us that brings about the union. We become joined to Christ, and it is in Him that we are joined to God. We never become joined to God in ourselves.

It is there that all this teaching which has become known as the

new theology has its occasion: that man really is God potentially and eventually he will arrive at deification. This is the devil's lie. We never do become God and God never does become us. We are still fallen men and women in the flesh. But God has joined Himself with a perfect Man, perfect humanity, and that perfect humanity by the Holy Spirit is put within our hearts (not made us). The Holy Spirit within us is the Spirit of Christ's perfect humanity and He is also the Spirit of God, and these two now in us brings us into intercommunion with God in Christ, not in ourselves. It is all in Christ. The incarnation is God and Man in One Person. Put that One Person spiritually within a renewed heart, a renewed spirit, and there at the centre of the born anew child of God you have got God and man united. Ever keep the line between what we are still by nature and the fact that Christ is in us. It is a different thing altogether. We are still what we are by nature, but something else has happened, and that happening is that there has come into us that which is of God, and it is accountable for the entire new outlook, capacity, interest which we have, that now we know that our strongest drawings are heavenwards, Godwards. You say: Not always! Yes, always, but sometimes like the squirrel you come down from the tree on to the ground, but you are very glad to get up again and that proves that now there is the upward thing within, the heavenward thing within. Forgive me calling it a thing. It is: "Christ in you, the hope of glory".

When we take the cup, the symbol of the blood of the Lord Jesus, and by faith receive the virtue and value of His blood, what we are doing is to come on to covenant ground in that blood where we have intercommunion with God in His Son. We feed upon Christ, and that is intercommunion with God. What we mean by spiritually feeding upon Christ is that intercommunion of a feast with God. You remember when Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel went up into the mountain they first built an altar and sacrificed, and they ate and drank with the God of Israel, and entered into intercommunion with God in virtue of the sacrifice, the shed blood. They sat down to eat and drink with the God of Israel. When David is at last brought to Hebron, and all Israel



came to make David king in Hebron, they feasted together for three days. A type again of the Lord Jesus coming into His own under the anointing, being recognized as Lord and King, and those who are with Him in fellowship with His Kingship sitting down to eat and drink with Him. All the feasts of the Lord are simply intercommunion with the Lord. We have that when we spiritually partake of the Lord Jesus. That is the nature of the covenant.

Intercommunion is upon a basis of fellowship, but there can be no fellowship except on the basis of oneness of nature. If there is a duality of nature, warfare going on between natures, there is no fellowship. We know that in our own selves. We are told that by the Word of God: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other." We know that in our own being. And so fellowship can only be upon the basis of the one nature. Intercommunion on the basis of fellowship, fellowship on the basis of one nature, sharing the divine nature. "He hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature ...". We are not sinlessly perfect but we have something within us which is sinlessly perfect. That is the difference. The Holy Spirit in us bringing in the divine life, has introduced something incorruptible, sinless, incapable of sin. We are not incapable of sin, but that is. And it is by reason of that in us, energizing as a life principle, by reason of that we shall overcome sin. By reason of that we shall go on in victory over sin. "It is God that worketh (or energizeth) in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." God in you energizing. The power of the divine nature at work to will and to do.

*"The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us (you) that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ..." (Heb. 13:20,21).*

We want to be clear about this. There is a great deal of confusion on the subject of sinless perfection. It is true there is that in us which is absolutely sinlessly perfect and we are delivered from sin by reason of that which is in us; fellowship with God, then, is upon the basis of divine nature. Inasmuch as you and I yield to our own natures, fellowship with God is limited. Inasmuch as we follow the urge of the divine nature, fellowship with God is increased. That is only defining experience. The nature is in the life, and when the Lord gives to us the life of the ages, His own life, and we receive by faith the life of the Lord Jesus as typified in the precious blood, we have received what that life represents, the divine nature in essence, and we have come into the divine fellowship and into the place of intercommunion. Now that is a very holy thing, therefore the blood is always regarded as most sacred because it means all that, and this blood of the covenant must not be regarded as an unholy thing because of that which it embodies.

Now you see a great range of truth is embraced by this outline. The giving of His blood is the giving of His life, and in the giving of His life He gives everything. The whole truth of the blood given and drunk is that Christ is in us, and by Christ in us all those five things which we have mentioned are realized. Man and God are united in Him. Everything is in Christ.

Now we come for a little while to consider this sign of the covenant, literally in the Old Testament and spiritually in the New: the type and the antitype, circumcision. From the passages which you have read you have seen that Abraham was called: "The friend of God", that is, he came into fellowship with God in a very full and deep way. How did he become the friend of God? What was basic to that fellowship? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." What is that? That is the divine nature. Fellowship on the basis of divine nature. How did he prove that he believed? By his altar. Every time by the altar. It was the blood of the covenant. And then all that was gathered up into a sign. The covenant, the blood shed, and all the resultant benefit were gathered up into the sign of circumcision. I want to remind you that

when it says, "he believed God", the Hebrew word there carries with it the unqualified committal of one to another. It does not mean a mental attitude, that he believed mentally. The Hebrew word clearly means the unqualified committal of one to another; and that brings in the altar, and that explains the offering of Isaac. No reservations, he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God, so says James.

The Old Testament circumcision represents then, the covenant in blood. It carries with it spiritual likeness to God as the ground of friendship. It is interesting to notice the fragment here from the Jewish Talmud. It says that Abraham was not called perfect before he was circumcised. We understand from the New Testament that circumcision was a type of putting away the body of the flesh, and it is true that not until he was called perfect was the covenant made with him. You see, he had to come on to a certain ground which representatively, or typically was the ground of divine likeness, righteousness by faith.

I am going to take as an illustration that remarkable and somewhat difficult passage in Exodus 4 concerning Moses. The details are full of valuable meaning in this whole realm, but I cannot here go into all the details. Moses we are told in this part of the Word was met by God at a certain time and certain point and God sought to slay him. That was after the Lord had met him and commissioned him. God had called him, chosen him, commissioned him and now met him and sought to slay him. Now Moses, as a child of the covenant, had omitted the circumcision of his firstborn and thus he had been unfaithful to the covenant of Abraham. But this was the point, he was on his way with a commission and a message from the Lord to Pharaoh concerning Pharaoh's uncovenanted firstborn, and because the firstborn of Pharaoh was uncovenanted, it was exposed and doomed to death. Right in the very background of the domestic life of Moses, a similar condition prevailed. His firstborn had not been circumcised. So that the man who is going to preach to another has an inconsistency at the background of his life and that will expose him to the very thing which he is going to declare

as coming to others, judgment and death. God met him and sought to slay him. This is a solemn word for preachers, for workers. This is a principle which always remains. Even a divine call and divine election will not exempt us from the divine judgment if the background of our life is a contradiction. The remarkable thing is that it seems to have been clear both to him and to his wife what the trouble was, and that they were cut off from any further share in the covenant plans of the Lord for His people. Their deliverance and their establishment in the land was the covenant God made with Abraham. "... thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years ... afterward they shall come out with great substance." These are the covenant plans. Moses was called in relation to the covenant plans, and the sign of the covenant was lacking in the background of his own life; and they suddenly seemed to awake to the fact that in spite of the call, they had no further part or place from that moment, in the covenant plans of the Lord. Notice what happened instantly, spontaneously. The firstborn was circumcised, and some extraordinary things were said twice over by Zipporah, Moses' wife. She relates this to the relationship between herself and Moses, this act of circumcising the firstborn, and she puts their marriage relationship upon an entirely new basis. She speaks of him literally as a bridegroom to her in a new way. She calls him "a bridegroom of blood". What does she mean? What is behind all this? It just means this. That their relationship and their family which was in the divine will related to the covenant plans of God only had any valuable, living significance on the ground that the life of the flesh was put away. The life of the Spirit had to be entered into, so that through death they would come on to resurrection ground. How could they deliver a people from death and bring them out on resurrection ground if they had not come there themselves? Here was a relationship of a natural kind; that relationship must go down into death and come up on resurrection ground, and if standing there they could go on with their life work on a new basis. It is an abiding principle. Very often relationships have to go down into

death and be resurrected on to an altogether new plane before they can serve the Lord's things. Some of our closest relationships do not get anywhere for God's purposes until they have died on the natural plane and been resurrected on to the divine plane, brought on to the plane where it is divine life actuating. That, with a good deal more details lies behind this strange incident in Exodus chapter four. Then God let him go. It was as though Zipporah said: We are now newly covenanted to each other in the life of God, in the nature of God, in the fellowship of God, and but for this we should have been covenanted to death. A tremendous movement there. But this is not something remote, something mystical. It is very practical, right up to date, and you can test it. The New Testament comes in to show us how up to date it is.

Colossians 2:11-12 gives us the up-to-dateness of this very thing which happened with Moses. There we read about the circumcision of Christ — what is that? Well, His death, His burial and His resurrection: that is shown to be so in verse twelve. And the outward sign of that for the believer, as circumcision was in the old covenant, is baptism. Baptism represents our union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. That is the circumcision of Christ into which we enter by faith, and to which we testify in an act of obedience. Ask any Hebrew of old if he thought the will for the deed would satisfy the Lord. Whether he would say: "As to the matter of circumcision, I accept the thing in principle, in spirit I am one with it, but as for the act itself, well, it does not matter." God met Moses very definitely upon a practical issue. I have no doubt Moses agreed with the whole thing in spirit but God was not taking the will for the deed, and we cannot come on to that ground in the New Testament; and if you could do it on one thing you could do it on all things. God pins us down and says: Now then your practical testimony is required, not just your mental assent or will for the deed.

Our union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection testified to in baptism is coming by faith into what is called the circumcision of Christ, said to be the putting away of the whole body of the flesh. We said in the previous chapter of the corporate company

of Israel, that they had to be brought over on to that ground. To bring them with Moses meant the ground of death was going to be put away and death would have no power. In the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, death has been destroyed and robbed of its ground, its power. In union with Him in resurrection we are delivered from the power of death and we receive the value of this divine life, His life, indestructible, incorruptible, the life of the ages given to us as God's free gift. Now this is never given to the uncircumcised, never given on the ground of nature, only in Christ in death, burial and resurrection. His life; through that life, fellowship with God; fellowship and intercommunion. And what a lot that means. That means for us an opened heaven. When the Lord Jesus typically or symbolically accepted His cross in the Jordan, the heavens were opened to Him, and from that time everything He did was by reason of the revelation of the Spirit as to what the Father was doing. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." The heavens are opened to Him for the rest of His sojourn because typically or symbolically He has died to nature, and been raised in fellowship with God. An opened heaven is our inheritance in the covenant of His blood.

Service follows. As with Moses, so with us. Spiritual effective service demands all the virtue of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Really fruitful service in the Lord is on the ground of fellowship with the Lord, and issues from the life of the Lord in us.

You notice the Lord's attitude to the uncircumcised all the way through the Old Testament; they have no part in this business, they have no place in this work, they are outside; on this ground of what God is doing they are not permitted to encamp. The true work of the Lord is reserved to those in the covenant and is the issue of the life of the Lord within and fellowship with the Lord. Service comes that way. To put it more emphatically still, service requires the putting away of the flesh; spiritual service must have the flesh ruled out. Whenever the flesh comes in, and man by nature comes into the work of the Lord, you find the work of the Lord is spoilt or

arrested. That explains a great deal the conditions of things today. Man is trying to get into God's work, and God's work is being ruined by man's attempt to do it. It can only be done by the Spirit of God.

Finally, circumcision spiritually understood now is the ground of victory. It was with Moses. We were speaking about the test of faith through four hundred years, and nine judgments in Egypt, and after the nine judgments the Passover commanded, the blood of sprinkling ordered, and that was the victory, it effected the victory long delayed. They came out on the strength of that, they triumphed on the strength of that: Pharaoh was overthrown on the ground of that sprinkled blood. And victory is in the blood of the Lamb always. It is the secret of victory. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony ...". We have to come on to the ground of the blood, the ground of the covenant, that is, into those things which we have been mentioning in this chapter, to know victory.

So that the covenant in the blood is the putting away of the whole body of the flesh in death. It is entering into a life relationship in resurrection with the Lord. And this is coming to be possessed of that which is destined to produce the image of the Son of God in us, the divine likeness, the righteousness which we now have by faith. So that baptism and the cross are one. The one is the testimony to the other.

It is a very blessed thing that He, the God of peace, has brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep; He brings back the sheep by the same way. You see, the blood of an everlasting covenant demands resurrection or it cannot be an everlasting covenant. So the pre-eminent value of the covenant and the blood is resurrection, and it is that to which Jeremiah points in chapter 31:31:

*"Behold, the days come, saith YHWH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by*

*the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith YHWH."*

— you can link up Moses and Zipporah if you like in the covenant —

*"But this is the covenant that I will make ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it" (Jer. 31:33).*

That is only another way of saying: "Christ in you". Christ, the revelation of the divine mind, now in your heart. It is an inward thing. Jeremiah sees this outward thing is failing, this outward Passover is not carrying its real meaning and value, and in the day when God gets His testimony it will be an inward reality, a people in whom Christ dwells. That will be the testimony in fulness. The day of the outward Passover has broken down; the day of the inward Passover will be the day of triumph."



## **CHRIST'S DOMINION REPRESENTED BY THE CHURCH**

*Reading: Jeremiah 1:5,10.*

“In this chapter we come to another fragment. And it is gathered up into these two fragments which we have just read from verses 5 and 10: “A prophet unto the nations”. “I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms.”

That clearly says and means that the prophetic instrument of which the Lord will possess Himself for this end-time purpose is brought in relation to Himself in His sovereign governing, in His place of authority and dominion. Now that is the thing that we want to have explained and worked out for us.

Let us look at God's intention first of all as represented by this prophetic voice. It is important for us to see that with every reaction of God, in an instrument, or through a voice, it is not some new thing that the Lord is doing although the act may be a fresh one. The Lord is working back to His original intention and the voice is only raised up to bring back to the people what was God's thought concerning them from the beginning. I am afraid there is a mentality which regards such positions as are presented in the letter to the Ephesians as something extra and something beyond, and what is called “Ephesian truth” is regarded as additional truth and higher teaching. But it is all bound up with the very first step of man's relationship to God. It is coming to what was God's thought from the beginning and it lies in the direct line of the Lord's eternal purpose. It is on the same level as everything else. You call the forgiveness of sins and being saved one thing, and then you think

you move into an altogether different realm when you begin to speak about the church which is His Body seated together with Him in the heavenlies. It is only on the same level further on. It is the outworking of the first thing and all that is bound up with the very first step. It is not something different, something in another realm, and you can be just a simple Christian and leave all that higher teaching as though it belonged to another set of people and not simple Christians. If you are a simple believer you are a heavenly saint in embryo. If you are a humble follower of the Lord Jesus you are, in the thought of God, one seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. So that when the Lord comes back and speaks through a voice or an instrument which He raises up in a day of declension and departure, it is only to bring back His original thought and remind His people of His original intention concerning them.

Now God's intention: what was it, and what is it? God's intention from the beginning has always been that man should be in the place of dominion. That is basic. Remember that. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ..." (Ps. 8:6, AV). That is said concerning man.

Secondly, wherever you find a man or a company of people coming spiritually into covenant relationship with God, you find the element of dominion implicit in that relationship, in that position. Now that would take a lot of working out from the Old Testament. It is a general statement worthy of being pursued. I would perhaps throw light upon one or two of the most obvious illustrations of it. It is found in far more remote and less obvious instances than these. Take Abraham. Abraham came into covenant union with God, and then we are told about the greatness of Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek is elevated to a very high place in priestliness and in kingliness. He is a king and he is a priest but he recognized a superior greatness in Abraham and he set Abraham in a position of great dignity, and recognized him as one who was to be taken account of. Abraham truly recognized Melchizedek's greatness and value but Melchizedek took account of Abraham, and if you read the record you will see the high esteem

that Melchizedek had for Abraham. It meant that a man who has come into covenant union with God is elevated to a position of great spiritual and moral dignity; he is given a high place and his influence is a dominating influence. Kings came under the power of Abraham, and he was a prince in the earth by reason of his covenant union with the Lord. Take Israel themselves as another very conspicuous or outstanding illustration of this principle. What are they in themselves? Look at them in Egypt. Four hundred years of slavery, bondage, vassalage, resulting in their being incapable of raising a finger for their own deliverance. That four hundred years is a great testimony to the fact that the Jews as they were in themselves were not to be taken account of at that time among the great people of the earth. When they came, through the blood of the Passover lamb, into covenant union with Jehovah, everything changed. They were put over the nations, the power which dominated them for four hundred years was broken under them, and while they remained true to the spiritual terms and principles of that covenant, although a nation without any military history or training, a nation with a background of shame, weakness, defeat, helplessness, there was not a nation or a kingdom on the face of the earth that could ride over them. They were supreme among the nations and that was by reason of their covenant relationship to YHWH. The Old Testament is just packed full of this principle. No matter what the man, or the men, or the people might be by nature, in covenant union with the Lord they were in the place of dominion. God's intention is seen in every instrument which came into the covenant spiritually. And yet the Old Testament is but a book of illustrations of the principle, types. They failed, and with the end of the Old Testament you have no standing monument to that principle. Types have come and they have gone and man is not in the place of dominion as God intended. Everything is in a state of defeat, weakness and breakdown.

Thirdly, God's intention is realized in Christ. The other had to break down to make way for Christ, and when Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant comes, in whom the covenant is eternally secured,

in whose blood it is established for ever, whose blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant, God's eternal purpose and thought for man is fully realized. Christ, in virtue of His blood, the blood of the covenant, is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and says: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth", and "... he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion ...". But He is there as Man.

*"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels ... and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet .... But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him ... even Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:6-9).*

He is the representative Man after God's own heart. The eternal intention for man is realized in Christ.

The fourth thing is that God's intention lies behind the calling out of the church. The calling out of the church is upon the basis that God has determined that His purpose, His intention, should be realized not only in One representative Man, but in a great multitude forming the spiritual body of that Man. "The church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all". The calling of the church is upon the basis of God's eternal intention, but the calling of the church does not take place until that intention is realized in the Head of the church, so that the church, being called into organic union with the Head is organically united with Him in dominion. That is God's intention. In this present time that is spiritual. Hereafter the spiritual will work through to the literal. That is, now dominion with Christ is spiritual. In this present time we are called into spiritual fellowship with Christ in His authority in heaven and in earth. Later, with the change of the dispensations that will be a literal thing.

Now you have the four points of God's intention.

That which specifically relates to the ages to come has its connection spiritually with what the Lord wills to be now, and it is that with which we are occupied with at this present time. God's eternal purpose is bound up with His Son, the Lord Jesus, and that can be gathered up into this one ultimate declaration, that He should be King of kings and Lord of lords. That is the thing to which God works. It is that which is the final thing. He will be literally, actually in that position when God has put all His enemies under His feet literally as He has already done virtually. So that at the centre of the universe Christ is seen ultimately as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Moving from the centre to the circumference: His glory, His majesty, His dominion will be manifested to the furthest ranges of the universe unto principalities and powers in the ages to come, the furthest bounds of the universe will speak of the glory and the majesty and the dominion of the Lord Jesus. He will in all things have the pre-eminence and Christ will be "all and in all". Wherever in the universe you move you will see Christ in glory and majesty and dominion reflected.

Within that compass of the universe we have the nations of the earth. In the book of the Revelation we are shown the heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, and we know by the context that that is the church. "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ...". You see the two things? The bride, the Lamb's wife; the Holy City. They are designations for the church, each designation carrying with it its own significance but not relating to a different entity or object. Now it says that this Holy City, this heavenly Jerusalem, the vessel of the glory of God descending and coming to occupy a place midway between heaven and earth, being the church, becomes the vehicle and vessel of the manifestation of the glory of Christ, and then it says: "And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof." That is, the nations will derive their light,

their glory, their majesty and their dominion from Christ, through the church which is His Body, and they will walk in the light which is in the church, the heavenly City. This is the figurative way of putting things. The church is called into a relationship with the Lord Jesus that will mean that what He is, as King of kings and Lord of lords, will be expressed to the nations through it, the church. So that within the nations is the church His Body the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. That is the calling and the election of the church His Body as we have it clearly stated in the letter to the Ephesians and elsewhere.”

[Ed.] At this point the author expounds his views on “the remnant”, or “the overcomers” which he modified in the later years of his ministry. This is not the place to debate over those points of view. It does seem to be justified to insert a reference here to the many great exhortations in the New Testament, both in the Gospels, the letters and Revelation, for the followers of Christ to go all the way unwaveringly and uncompromisingly. It has to be noticed, though, that going all the way in the faith is the normal thing to do for a Christian. Knowing that Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, the Christian continues, in the power of His resurrection. God did not call Jeremiah to have outstanding spiritual insight in order to qualify him for a position of dominion and thereby differentiate him from the people who did not have that insight. Jeremiah needed that insight to prophesy, to warn the people to get right with God. They did not listen. Yet God showed His unfathomable mercy in leaving a remnant. This is what Christians have to bear in mind as they ponder on God’s mercy. Grace is abundant. Grace is free, but it asks for a proper answer. Believers must handle grace with great care, weigh its immeasurable costliness. The New Testament again and again shows that if Christians do that, they find that nothing is too difficult or too hard to endure for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Indeed, behold the preciousness of the New Jerusalem!

“This represents God’s intention, that man should be in dominion, in covenant union with Him, and as we have seen the covenant union with God is in the blood of the Lord Jesus. “They

overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb”, on the ground of the covenant and all that the covenant represents.

We have already said that what is going to be in the ages to come is connected to how it is now spiritually and how God wants it to be now, and in this chapter we are taken up with the spiritual aspect of that. We have seen the intention of God, and we have seen it realized in Christ, and we have seen the church called into what is already realized in the Head, the Lord Jesus. Now the spiritual factors of God’s intention must next be recognized.

The first factor of the intention of God is a oneness of life with God, a sharing of His life. We can never come to the place of dominion, in union with Christ according to God’s eternal thought, only on the ground firstly that we share the very life of God with Him, and that we only do so through new birth in virtue of the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, that life carries with it the nature of God. The covenant is our union with God by sharing His own nature, and that is given to us in the life, by the Holy Spirit. The dominion for which we are destined and chosen by God is upon the basis of sharing His nature. Let us emphasize that because it is not by official appointment. Certain disciples came to the Lord Jesus one day and sought a pledge from Him that one would be on His right hand and the other on His left hand when He came into His kingdom, and His answer was: “Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but ... for whom it is prepared” (see Mark 10:35-45, AV). Now if there is ever an illustration of divine wisdom you have it in that statement. It is the most noncommittal statement: “... for whom it is prepared.” Who? Not for anybody who is going to be officially appointed, but it is reserved for a spiritual state.”

[Ed.] The author goes on to say that our place in glory will depend on our approximation to the Lord Jesus. In the passage that is quoted from the gospel of Mark Jesus affirms that James and John will – in a way – share in His sufferings, and that they will be able to endure them. But when it comes to prominence among the disciples, Jesus is less outspoken. The other ten disciples react indignantly, which gives Jesus the perfect occasion to teach them the principles of prominence in the Kingdom of God:

*“But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

The implication is that a disciple in the Kingdom of God will never occupy his mind with having authority, but will only seek to be like his Master in unconditionally serving others and giving.

In his commentary on Mark, James R. Edwards observes how James and John contrast Bartimaeus in the next paragraph<sup>1</sup>. Jesus asks the same question, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Jesus restores his eyesight, but what is more important is that Bartimaeus “... followed Jesus in the way”. It was the way up to Jerusalem (vs. 32), of which James and John had thought it was the way of Jesus’ Messianic inauguration, a procession to grandeur. It was, but not in the way they thought it would go. Jesus had – again in vain – tried to explain to His disciples that it was the way of the cross (vss. 33-34). It looks as if James and John had heard Him only selectively; only the words “He shall rise” had stuck to their ears. It may have been this incident that Peter had in mind when he wrote,

*“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a*

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1. Edwards, James R., (2002), *The Gospel According to Mark*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids: PNTC, pp. 321-328.



*witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:1-4).*

This exhortation endorses the concept of a special reward for church leadership. It is even good to have ambition for leadership, says Paul (1 Tim. 3:1). But we might think twice when we look at the lives of Peter and Paul and hear the latter say that he is “already being poured out as a drink offering” (2 Tim. 4:6), having “the crown of righteousness” before him as a reward from the Lord.

The “chief Shepherd”, the good Shepherd: that brings us back to Jeremiah and his vision of the Kingdom of God (Jer. 2:8, 3:15, 12:10, 31:10). T. Austin-Sparks continues.

“Those who are most like Him will be nearest to Him in that Kingdom. That is the condition. The only way is to be like the Lord. The more you are like the Lord the higher will be your place in the glory. That leads to the nature of the Lord Jesus in the covenant of His blood, and that is basic to dominion. The life, and the nature, lead on to the fellowship.

Fellowship with God in Christ is basic to dominion. Abraham was called the friend of God because he believed God, and as we pointed out, the Hebrew word means, he without any reservation, unconditionally, gave himself to God. That is seen in the gift of his only and well-beloved son who to him was more than life. He believed God enough to give, without any reservation, wholly to Him. And it was accounted to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God. Fellowship with God, beloved, is coming into that relationship with the divine heart where everything is for the Lord. That is in a sense the passive side.

Fourthly, there is intercommunion with the Lord. I have said

fellowship is, in a sense, the passive side, where we come to the place where all is for God and God is everything. Intercommunion is the active. It is represented by the eating of the flesh of the Pass-over lamb. It was a feast, and the active side of fellowship, which is intercommunion, just means that we take from God what is His, and make it ours, and God takes from us what we bring to Him in Christ, and makes it His. And that is an active side of things. We have an inheritance in the Lord, and we seek to be spiritually exercised to become possessed of our inheritance in Christ. On the other hand, the Lord has an inheritance in the saints and we seek to give the Lord His inheritance in us. That is the active side of fellowship. That is intercommunion. It is giving and taking with the Lord.

Now there you have the fourfold spiritual fact of God's intention, the elements of the covenant; and on that basis we come to share in the dominion of the Lord Jesus. By the life, by the nature, by the fellowship, where the Lord has everything, and by the intercommunion where there is the taking and the giving to the Lord. It means that we give to the Lord, and we receive. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His enthronement by taking from the Lord what He offers and making it ours by spiritual exercise, and giving to the Lord what He requires that He may make it His.

Now I come to the closing word which heads things up to their practical issue: What is the all-inclusive secret of God's intention? It is the Holy Spirit. Firstly the Holy Spirit comes in relation to Christ in dominion. Do not forget that the Holy Spirit never came at Pentecost until Christ was exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and when He was exalted He received the Holy Spirit from the Father, and poured forth this. The Holy Spirit came as the Spirit of the exaltation of Christ to the place of dominion. And He came as that Spirit into the apostles and set up in them the life and the power and the consciousness of the absolute Kingship of the Lord Jesus. The secret of dominion is the Holy Spirit coming within to set up the witness to and the consciousness of the dominion of Christ. You have the explanation why they went out everywhere. They were oppressed, persecuted, pursued, afflicted, deprived of

everything in this world, and yet triumphant all the time: simply because the Holy Spirit had set up within them the unshakeable conviction and knowledge that the Lord Jesus was Lord. No matter how things seemed to be, they knew He was Lord, and although at times it looked just to be the contrary, they knew if they held on long enough it would be demonstrated that Jesus Christ was Lord. So Paul and Silas bear witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ at Philippi, find themselves in a dungeon, in chains, backs bleeding, and it looks as though their testimony was all wrong, but they sang and prayed and that is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is maintaining the Lordship of Jesus Christ and keeping them on that ground. The result was the conversion of the Philippian jailor, his household saved and baptized, an assembly set up in Philippi, and a two-thousand year old letter to the church. It will be interesting to know how many souls will be in heaven at last on the strength of the Philippian letter. I believe not a few.”

[Ed.] Indeed, it will be wonderful to see, in the resurrection, how many souls have pressed on “towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philipp. 3:14, ESV), who have given heed to Paul’s advice to imitate him (vs. 17), so that they can ...

*“... await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

*Therefore, (...) stand firm thus in the Lord, ...” (3:20-4:1, ESV).*

“I believe that there will be a large enough company to prove the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus as set over against that Philippian jail which was Satan’s effort to contradict the testimony of Jesus. You see what I mean? In principle in the long run the Holy Spirit is vindicated in His testimony in the saints even through suffering. “Be filled with the Spirit” means to be filled with the unshakeable confidence and assurance that Christ is on the Throne no matter how things seem. The Holy Spirit is the all-inclusive

secret of the purpose, the intention of God that man shall be in dominion, because He is the Spirit of Christ enthroned.

Secondly, because He brings the spiritual facts of God's intention into the believer. The Holy Spirit brings these four facts into the believer and, therefore, brings the basis of dominion. The Holy Spirit brings the life, the nature, the fellowship, the intercommunion. All these things are in and by the Holy Spirit in the believer. There is no life without the Spirit; there is no likeness without the Spirit; there is no fellowship, no intercommunion without the Spirit. The Spirit brings them all and in the believer lays the foundations of the dominion of Christ. The foundations of the dominion are spiritual and moral, not merely official or anything natural, such as natural gifts or qualifications. The Holy Spirit raises the ignorant, the unlearned, the illiterate to the place of dominion in the heavens. It is not a matter of natural qualifications at all: it is a matter of whether we are filled with the Spirit whether we shall reign. Anybody filled with the Spirit reigns already spiritually, and will reign literally later.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit takes charge of the world commission. The Lord had given a world commission to His apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature", but that commission was suspended, was held in abeyance. They were not allowed to go out immediately. When were they to fulfil it? The time of its fulfilment was not given as a date but as a state. The Lord did not say: Now on such and such a day in the month of May go out and fulfil that commission. He said: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses ...". It was a state, and the date of the fulfilment of the world commission was taken into the hands of the Holy Spirit. He took charge of the world commission, and when He came it started, but mark you, it was because the Holy Spirit took charge of the world commission that it was of a special character. Oh that we would get back to this, and really this is what the Lord wants to say in these messages. It is a getting back to God's standard. What is the world commission according to the divine mind? It is this, the Holy Spirit in charge, taking out to the nations something which in the nations will be the

power of divine life, the power of divine nature, the power of fellowship, the power of divine intercommunion. That is what the church is for. It is not the proclamation of certain facts about the Lord Jesus: it is the representation of facts among people. It is to get into the nations and demonstrate facts. The facts are: the power of a life which is more than a match for the power of spiritual death. The power of resurrection spiritually — later it will be literal. There will be literal victory over death eventually. The church will represent the fact that death has been swallowed up for ever. At present it is a spiritual demonstration of that — that there is a life in the Body of Christ and its members which is more than a match for spiritual death. That is the testimony of Jesus. That is the vocation of the church. That is the Holy Spirit's fulfilling of the world commission. I am afraid we have dropped a good bit behind that and think that the world commission is going out and preaching things about the Lord Jesus, but it is more demonstrating things than proclaiming. It is the impact of Christ in the Throne and a life triumphant over death. You need not go there, but where the Lord puts you as a member of His Body you are called in the power of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His triumph over death spiritually, be a witness of life triumphant over death spiritually. That is what you have in the book of the Acts all the way through.

And then again, the world commission is an expression, a manifestation of the spiritual and moral nature of Christ in the church. The testimony against the evil thing that is in the rest of the nations in the world; the evil thing everywhere. A testimony. This is why the enemy is always trying to break down the spiritual and moral life of the saints because that spiritual and moral life is the testimony of Christ on the Throne. Our spiritual and moral life is bound up with Christ being on the Throne. That ought to encourage us tremendously. It means because He has overcome spiritually and morally and is there established in victory beyond any dispute, and we are, by the Holy Spirit, in relation to Him as there in victory, we can in Him overcome spiritually and morally now, and represent Him in His divine nature. That is the testimony. Again, it is not declaring facts

about the Lord Jesus: it is showing the Lord Jesus, manifesting the Lord Jesus in the nations.

Fellowship and intercommunion are two other phases of the Holy Spirit's work by the church in the nations; to show in the nations what fellowship with God really is. That is no small witness. When men can look on and see under the most trying circumstances, or conditions of life, a walk in fellowship with God and a life where God has everything and is everything, that is a great testimony: that is the testimony in the nations, that is the world commission. It is this life with the Lord of interchange, intercommunion.

It seems to me that that is why the Lord has planned to have assemblies everywhere, revealing what Christ is in life, in nature, in fellowship, in intercommunion with the Father. It seems to me that is why the devil is always out to destroy assembly life because assembly life is the mightiest testimony that there is to the victory and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. What I see is the Lord putting down in the nations those who do not just preach about Him, but represent Him, and there is a great deal of difference. The Holy Spirit took charge of that matter and when you see the Holy Spirit's work done you see He has formed companies of people in all nations to represent the Lord Jesus, and the devil is out to destroy that representation. That is our world commission. How shall the testimony be extended? We will leave that question for some other time.”

*To be continued.*









The purpose of this publication is to encourage God's people to lay hold on eternal life, the hope set before them, knowing that Jesus Christ, their Saviour, will soon return to establish His eternal Kingdom, "so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12).

thegoldencandlestick.nl  
E-mail: [thegoldencandlestick@gmail.com](mailto:thegoldencandlestick@gmail.com)