

The Wisdom of God Displayed in the Mystery of Redemption

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The most distinguished period in the history of Israel as a nation, may unquestionably be traced to the reign of Solomon. The boundaries of his empire, stretching over the whole extent of the promised land, extended from the border of Egypt to the banks of the Euphrates (Compare Gen 15:18, with II Chron 9:26). His extraordinary talents made him the object of universal admiration, and secured for his people the blessings of peace and prosperity, while his glory was spread over all the world. To this era, associated as it was with every circumstance of national grandeur, the descendants of Abraham have always looked back with the fondest emotions of regret. But in no part of the history of Solomon—as we find it recorded in the word of God—is there a scene half so brilliant and imposing as that presented to our view in the account of the dedication of the Temple.

There we behold a young, accomplished and illustrious monarch, by whose unrivalled wisdom and vast resources, a structure, perhaps the most magnificent the world ever saw, had just been completed, kneeling in the midst of his assembled subjects, and supplicating the God of Israel to take possession of his house. The Lord had promised to dwell in the midst of his chosen people; he had marked out the spot on which his temple was to be built (I Chron 22:1,2; II Chron 3:1). It had been constructed according to the pattern communicated to David by the Holy Spirit (I Chron 28:12-19), and there was no room to suspect that Jehovah would not make it his abode. But this did not preclude the necessity of prayer. Prayer does not imply any distrust in the faithfulness of our heavenly Father; his promises must always be the foundation of our petitions, and the stronger our faith is, the more fervent will be our supplications (Eze 36:37; James 1:6,7; II Sam 7:27; Matt 15:22-28).

Of this the prayer of Solomon affords a striking and most beautiful example. He earnestly beseeches the God of Israel to descend and fulfil his promise to David, and at the same time he evinces the most perfect confidence in the faithfulness of Him who is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He seems to behold his prayer already accomplished, and the Lord of the Universe descending to sojourn in this world. No wonder then that Solomon, overwhelmed and transported with the thought, should exclaim, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?” (II Chron 6:18). We do not stop to inquire in what sense Solomon understood the words, which, under the influence of the Spirit, he was led to employ. We are taught that the prophets did not always comprehend the meaning of their own predictions (John 11:49-51; I Cor 2:9,10), and that, on some occasions at least, they were commanded to be satisfied with knowing that the revelation of the divine purposes was not given so much for their own instruction, as for the sake of those who should live in after ages (I Peter 1:10-12). Certain it is, that this remarkable passage implies the expectation of that astonishing event—the accomplishment of which was reserved for these latter days.

That God should condescend “to dwell with men on earth”—that He should assume the form of a weak and fallen creature—that He should submit to all the pains and sorrows which mortality is heir to—might well excite the wonder and amazement of the universe. Truly it is a thing which never could have entered into the heart of men or angels, had not the Most High himself revealed it by his Spirit. And yet in this act of condescension—in the incarnation of the Saviour—in God “dwelling with men on the earth”—there is a display of power and wisdom so vast and incomprehensible, that the more we meditate upon it, the more shall we be disposed to exclaim with the apostle, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom 11:33).

It is the object of these pages to illustrate some of the important ends which were designed by Providence in “God’s dwelling with men on the earth”—but in order that we may the more fully understand the subject, it seems necessary previously to notice a few of the intimations by which God was pleased to signify his gracious purpose, and to mark the accomplishment of the grand event.

Every attentive reader of scripture must have been struck with the repeated instances there recorded of the manifestation of God in human form.

On one occasion, Jehovah, attended by two angels, appeared to Abraham, and condescended to partake of the food which the Patriarch had prepared while ignorant of the quality of his guests. The two angels proceeded towards Sodom, and the Lord remained, and revealed himself to Abraham (Gen 18:1-33).

God afterwards appeared to Jacob as a man, and the name of the place was in consequence called Penial; “for,” said Jacob, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen 32:24-30). Various other exhibitions of God in human form are mentioned, and in these was given a striking intimation that the only-begotten of the Father should be partaker of flesh and blood, and that God should in very deed dwell with men on the earth.

Again, God not only promised to be the King of Israel, and to dwell among them, but commanded a tent to be erected for his habitation. Into this tent (or tabernacle) the priests alone were permitted to enter. Besides other furniture, it had a golden candlestick, with seven lamps, which were constantly kept burning, and a table on which twelve loaves of bread were placed, which were exchanged for fresh loaves on the Sabbath. Solomon afterwards built the temple, which was the palace of the King of Israel (I Chron 29:1), and was furnished in the same manner as the tabernacle. In it the shew-bread continued to be placed, and the priests to minister. Here then was a palace built, food provided, and household servants waiting for the coming of the King of Israel, the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts (Psalm 24:10); and thus it was plainly intimated that God was in very deed to dwell with men on the earth.

The same astonishing event was foretold by the prophets; and of this the context of the passage we have quoted from the prayer of Solomon furnishes a proof. God had sworn with an oath to David, “that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts 2:30). Solomon entreats that this promise may be accomplished: “Now therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, there shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way, to walk in my law as thou hast walked before me. Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.” But as if overwhelmed with the consideration of the magnitude of the promise, he exclaims, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth: Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built” (II Chron 6:16-18).

Thus the accomplishment of the promise to David, that there should not fail him a man to sit upon the throne of Israel, is connected in the scripture, which “cannot be broken” (John 10:35), with God in very deed dwelling with men on the earth; and this exactly corresponds with the apostolic explanation of a part of the same promise, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (II Sam 7:14) which is quoted as a decisive proof of Christ’s superiority to the angels (Heb 1:5).

Isaiah foretold that the virgin’s son should be called Immanuel (Isa 7:14), which being interpreted, is God with us; “unto us,” says the same prophet, “a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isa 9:6,7). “Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall lead his flock like a shepherd” (Isa 40:10,11; compare Luke 1:76 with John 10:11).

Micah at once informs us of the dignity of the Redeemer, and the place of his birth. “But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Malachi thus predicts the coming of Jehovah to the house, which as we have already seen, was prepared for him. “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger [or angel] of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal 3:1). The same prophet having foretold the coming of the Messiah, under the title of the Sun of Righteousness, adds, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal 4:5): and we learn from an infallible commentator, that this refers to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah (Matt 17:10-13).

Such are some of the numerous predictions that God was in very deed to dwell with men on the earth, which received their full accomplishment in Jesus Christ. That Jesus united in his wonderful person both the Divine and human nature, we learn from various parts

of the New Testament. The apostle John, after describing him as the Word, who was with God, and was God, as having been from the beginning, and having created all things without exception, as the fountain of life, proceeds, “and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Paul characterizes him as over all, God blessed for ever (Rom 9:5); as God manifest in the flesh (I Tim 3:16); worshipped by all the angels of God, seated for ever on this throne; the great Creator of heaven and earth (Heb 1:6,10). Many other passages might be mentioned, in which this fundamental truth is explicitly declared; but, as has been well observed, the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ is established, not merely by particular passages, but is so wrought into the whole texture of scripture, that it cannot be denied without destroying the whole fabric (Dr. Priestly admitted, that were this doctrine found in the scriptures, he would not hesitate to pronounce them a forgery. What a striking comment on such passages as I Cor 2:14; 3:18; Luke 18:17).

Thus were the predictions that God should dwell with men on the earth fulfilled in Jesus.—Thus did he, who stretched out the heavens as a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth, by an act of condescension, at once un-paralleled and overwhelming, stoop to enter this world, to be born of a woman, and appear in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And how was the Saviour received? Was his appearance welcomed by the grateful hosannahs of the sons of men? Was he worshipped and adored as “God manifest in the flesh?” Was he hailed as the deliverer of mankind from the cruel thralldom of Satan? Or, at all events, did not the chosen people of God recognize in him their long expected king and prophet; and when they heard of his birth, did they not, like the Eastern Magi, hasten to present their offerings as the tribute of their homage? O no! He came to his own, but his own received him not; he was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Here then we may see portrayed in living characters the wickedness of the human heart, and how it is led captive by the Prince of Darkness. Had the Son of God occupied a palace—had he, like Solomon, been surrounded with worldly pomp and grandeur—had he employed that power by which he controls the universe in the exaltation of his friends, and the destruction of his enemies, he would have been admired and caressed. But he was meek and lowly; he not only assumed our nature, but was among men as one that serveth (Luke 22:27). He thus pathetically describes his situation in a world which he had called into existence: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay

his head” (Matt 8:20). He never courted the approbation of the world, but testified of it that its works were evil. He came for the purpose of delivering his people from the destruction to which, in consequence of sin, it is irreversibly doomed, and he poured contempt on all that it bestows on its votaries. He consequently appeared in the eyes of those who were blinded by the god of this world, as having no form nor comeliness; but in the midst of his humiliation, the moral splendour with which he was invested totally eclipsed all that is esteemed among men.

Nothing could more strongly mark the opposition of heaven and earth, than the birth, the life, and death of Jesus. His mother could find no room in the inn, his birth-place was a stable, and his cradle a manger. Here he lay in our world, unnoticed and unknown, while a multitude of the heavenly host celebrated his praise, and united in the rapturous song to which his nativity gave rise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

When he came to be baptized, his presence attracted no attention; there was no external pomp to distinguish him from the surrounding multitude; but his Father’s eye was upon him—and while the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape, and rested on him, the voice of the Almighty proclaimed him to be his only-begotten Son, in whom he delighted.—With wicked hands men nailed him to the cross. Stripped of his garments, and numbered with the transgressors, the Saviour was exposed to the gaze of the people: but the sun withdrew his light, and a veil of supernatural darkness shrouded the agonizing sufferer.

A stranger provided him a tomb; but the angels who had attended him through life watched over his body. A stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre; it was sealed and made sure, and a guard stationed to prevent the approach of his disciples. But the angel of the Lord descended and broke the seal; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did quake, and became as dead men. He announced to the women the joyful tidings of the resurrection of the Son of God, and shewed them the place where the Lord of life had lain.

Thus, while the sons of earth combined to pour contempt on the Saviour, the inhabitants of heaven were always at hand to testify their profound veneration of him, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

What then, we may inquire, were the ends contemplated in this astonishing act of condescension? Surely it was to accomplish no

ordinary purpose in the government of the universe, that the Saviour of the world left the throne of his Father's glory, and condescended to dwell with men on the earth.

1. One grand end which it contemplated was, to reconcile the unbending principles of the Divine justice and truth with the salvation of an innumerable multitude of the human race.

The nature of man is wonderful, and forms a link between the spirits around the throne, and the beasts that perish. Possessing appetites in common with the lower animals, he is capable of knowing, loving, and holding communion with his Creator. At once allied to earth and heaven, he was placed in a situation exactly adapted to his constitution. He dwelt in Eden, where, surrounded by the beauties of nature, and every object that was calculated to gratify the senses, his Creator revealed himself as the great Proprietor, to whom alone his homage was due. God granted him permission freely to eat of the trees of the garden, with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty attached to disobedience was death, and thus was Adam taught his entire dependence on God, for life and all its enjoyments.

Adam presumed to disobey, and God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent: the word had gone out of his mouth that the wages of sin is death, and both his truth and justice stood pledged for the infliction of the penalty.

But the Lord regarded guilty man with pity; his rebellion was indeed inexcusable, but he had fallen into the snare of one who, glorying in the elevated rank which he once held in the scale of being, had said, "I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." He beguiled Eve by his subtlety, and imagined that he had completely blasted this lower creation, and for ever alienated man from God.

And was it not so? Had not man subjected himself to the curse, and who could redeem him from death? Our first father was created in the image of God; but in casting off his allegiance he had at once lost the image, and forfeited the favour of his Maker. His children were begotten in his own likeness, after his image, condemned and accursed, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart (Eph 4:18; 2:3); consequently by nature the children of wrath.

Such were the awful circumstances in which Adam's posterity were placed. Truth and justice not only required that man should bear his merited punishment; he was also incapable of enjoying happiness. God is the fountain of joy; in his favour is life, but man had forfeited his favour, and rendered himself incapable of holding communion with his Creator. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom 8:7).

Light and darkness are not more opposite than God and sin; he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity (Hab 1:13); he sits upon the throne of his holiness, he pervades the universe, and his providence equally extends to the greatest events and to the most minute circumstances. Whither then should the sinner fly from his presence?—or where should he find a place where he may indulge with impunity his appetite for sin? “Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them” (Amos 9:2,3).

Whether then we consider the justice, truth, and unchangeableness of God, or man's incapacity of enjoying happiness, his state after the fall appeared to be completely without hope. He was neither able nor desirous of restoring himself to the friendship of God, and there seemed to remain nothing but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

Our first parents anticipated their doom, and when, in the cool of the evening, they heard the voice of God—that voice which they had never before heard but with feelings of holy joy—attempted to hide themselves amidst the trees of the garden. When summoned into his presence, they were constrained to acknowledge their guilt; and while the Lord informed them that they should eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices, that they should spend their days in sorrow, and afterwards return to the dust, he promised them a Saviour, who should overcome their great adversary; and thus a door of hope beyond the grave was opened for fallen man. The woman had been first in the transgression, and was doomed to bring forth children in sorrow; but from her the promised Saviour was to spring. He was then to be a man. But we are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil continually (Gen 6:5), and was it possible that any individual of such a race could save his brethren? No, none of them can by any

means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (Psalm 49:7).

What then was to be done? Must an angel unite himself with fallen man—be born into our world, and save our ruined race? Must an angel make atonement for our transgressions, restore the honour of God's broken law, endure the curse under which we lay, and thus take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive? No, the highest created being is as much dependent on his Maker as the worm that crawls upon the ground. He is in the situation which the Almighty has assigned to him, and in it he must remain. He holds his existence at God's good pleasure, and has neither the right nor the power to dispose of himself. Were he to submit to the lowest degradation for the glory of God, he would but answer the end of his creation; he would still be an unprofitable servant, and his goodness could not extend to his fellow-creatures.

It only remained that God himself should undertake the work; that he should assume our nature; and that by a life of the most unsullied purity, as well as by bearing the curse pronounced on sinful man, he should magnify the law which we had broken, and thus open a way in which the righteous Governor of the universe might receive into favour all whom the Redeemer should acknowledge as brethren.

A body was therefore prepared in the womb of the virgin, and the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Although he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. During life it was his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father, and he offered himself to God for a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:6-8). No man took his life from him; he laid it down of himself. He had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again (John 10:18); he was a voluntary sacrifice; and thus did he restore what he took not away. God laid on him the iniquities of his people, and he bore them all to the land of forgetfulness.

Adam lost the divine image, and died as a transgressor. Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, was made a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin; he redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; and by

rising from the dead as the head and representative of his people, he proved that justice was satisfied, that he had made full atonement for sin, had brought in everlasting righteousness, and that all his people who, in consequence of their connection with Adam, are doomed to return to the dust, shall, in virtue of their union with Christ, be raised from the dead to the enjoyment of eternal life. Thus the debt was fully paid, and now grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

Adam's transgression procured the death of all his posterity, and Christ's atonement has procured the resurrection of all his people. The first man by his wickedness involved his whole race in condemnation; the second man by his righteousness secured pardon and acceptance with God to all his redeemed.

In human nature the divine authority was set at nought, and Adam by his disobedience poured contempt on the holy law of God: but in the same nature ample satisfaction was made for sin. Such was the dignity of the second Adam, and such, in consequence, the value of his obedience unto death, that mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other; and while the voice of the Eternal proclaimed that he had found a man in whom his soul delighted, and through whom his love could flow to our ruined race, the angels adored this fresh discovery of the glory of their Creator, and the heavenly mansions resounded with the joyful song: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

But we noticed, that man was not only under the curse, but that, in consequence of the alienation of his mind from God, he was cut off from the fountain of joy, and was incapable of happiness. This is also provided for in the wonderful plan of redemption. The perfect reconciliation of believing sinners to God, is exhibited in the person of Immanuel, their glorious Head. In him the divine and human natures are united. He is the Umpire, who lays his hand upon both parties. With him the honour of the divine government is safe, for he is over all, God blessed for ever; and the interest of man is equally secure, for he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

The children of fallen Adam are born of corruptible seed, but in Christ Jesus believers are created anew; they are born of the incorruptible seed of the Word (I Peter 1:23). They are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit with him (I Cor 6:17). Their body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in them (I Cor 6:19), which they have of God (II Cor 3:3). The law of God is written in their hearts, and their

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This communion is real, though imperfect; it is frequently interrupted through the influence of sin, but it is maintained by the supply of the Spirit which believers receive from their glorious Head, and God will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Ere long they shall be completely freed from the body of sin and death; as they have borne the image of the earthly, they shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam (I Cor 15:49); they shall be satisfied when they awake with God's likeness (Psalm 17:15).

Adam estranged himself from God, and all friendly intercourse between man and his Creator was apparently for ever at an end. But in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of a woman; in him was no sin; and the Almighty, enthroned as he is in light and purity, beheld with infinite complacency a man who delighted to do all his will, and who hesitated not to die an accursed death, that he might glorify his heavenly Father, and open a channel through which mercy might flow to the lost and guilty; through which the Creator might again receive the homage of his rebellious offspring, and might shower down on his once lost and ruined creature the blessings of his grace, the overflowing of the kindness of paternal love.

No sooner had Jesus accomplished the work of reconciliation, than he sat down on the right hand of power, as the great High-priest of those with whom he had taken part in flesh and blood; and having received honour and glory as the recompense of his sufferings, he became the medium of intercourse between God and man; receiving from the Father every spiritual and heavenly blessing, and communicating all the treasures of wisdom and love to his people, who are represented as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones (Eph 5:30). All mankind spring from Adam, and in consequence of his rebellion are doomed to return to the dust. Jesus is the head of a new creation, the members of which are all partakers of eternal life; a life not derived from Adam, but from the Son of God, of the perpetuity of which his life is the assured pledge (John 14:19).

Hence believers are said to be dead; their life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory (Col 3:4). They are broken off from the stock of nature; from the tree which the curse of God blasted and dried up, and they are grafted into the good olive-tree; they have become branches of the living vine, and through the sap and nourishment thus communicated to them, they bring forth fruit unto God.

Thus does God give to believers eternal life, and this life is in his Son; and for this purpose God condescended in very deed to dwell with men on the earth.

2. Another great end of this astonishing act of condescension was, that a stop might be put to the progress of sin.

It results from the character of God, that all his works were originally good. Sin, however, entered the universe; but it did not originate with man. It had gained admission previous to his creation, it had proved the ruin of multitudes of the rebel angels, and by their prince it was introduced into our world. How awful are the effects of sin, how does it blind the minds of those who are caught in its toils! The angels who excel in strength, who stood in the presence of God, presumed to rebel; and although they immediately began to reap the fruit of their wickedness; yet, impelled by pride and alienation from God, they persisted in the desperate warfare; attempted to thwart the schemes of their Creator, and to tarnish his glory by the ruin of mankind. Thus did they sink themselves deeper in the pit of destruction, while, in consequence of their opposition, his character, who maketh the wrath of his mightiest enemies to praise him, shone forth with added lustre. Surely there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord. He that sitteth in the heavens, laughs at the puny efforts of his enemies to counteract his will; and while he speaks to them in wrath, and vexes them in his sore displeasure, his counsel always stands, and he does what he purposed in his heart.

Why sin was at first permitted we cannot tell. It was not owing to want of power, or wisdom, or goodness, in the Creator; but it made its appearance, it extended its influence to this world; and we learn from scripture, that one grand end which God had in view in dwelling with men on the earth, was to destroy the works of the devil, to arrest the progress of sin, and finally to sweep it from the face of the universe into that place whence it shall never escape to mar the beauty of creation, and shall only be recollected to enhance the glory of God and the felicity of all his obedient and intelligent creatures.

The scripture informs us, that this world was created by and for Jesus Christ (Col 1:16); it was intended as a theater on which his glory should be exhibited, and that by the church redeemed with his blood, the manifold wisdom of God might be known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph 3:10,11).

We enter not into the question, how the purpose of God to put a final stop to the progress of sin by the redemption of fallen man is

consistent with the guilt of Adam lying entirely with himself. To such a question our faculties are totally inadequate; but of one thing we are assured, that Adam was not tempted of God, for he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (James 1:13). Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world; from the beginning he has acted on a plan, originating in infinite wisdom and perfect goodness. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter (Pro 25:2). Clouds and darkness are round about him—righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne (Psalm 97:2): when the mystery of God shall be finished; in the great day of the revelation of his righteous judgment then all difficulties will be unravelled, and one harmonious song shall fill the universe. Great and marvelous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest (Rev 15:3,4).

In consequence of this world being created for the purpose of putting a final stop to the progress of sin in the universe, by the manifestation of the Son of God, every thing from the beginning was conducted with a view to this great object. Mankind were not created individually, but were all created, and blessed in Adam (See Genesis 1:25-30, and observe how the whole human race is included in the blessing there pronounced upon Adam).

Much has been said of a covenant made with Adam, according to which, after a certain term of probation, he and his posterity were to be established in the enjoyment of eternal life. But the scripture speaks nothing concerning such a covenant, and it is our wisdom to keep by what is written, and not to enter into speculations as to what might possibly have taken place. Had Adam stood fast in his allegiance, doubtless his posterity would have continued to enjoy those blessings which were bestowed on their head; but he fell, and involved his children in misery. This event, however, was not unprovided for, and before our first parents were expelled from Paradise, they heard the joyful tidings of salvation through Christ. In the mysterious providence of God Adam was ordained, a type or figure of him that was to come (Rom 5:14). That which was natural, prefigured that which was spiritual (I Cor 15:46); and as in Adam all his children die, so in Christ shall all his people be made alive (I Cor 15:22,23).

In Adam, formed of the dust of the ground, and made a living soul, we have seen all his offspring blessed with all natural blessings in earthly places; and in the second Adam, who is a quickening spirit (I Cor

15:45), believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1:3). As all Adam's children by his disobedience became children of wrath, and alienated from God, so by the victory of the second Adam, all believers are reconciled to God, and made heirs of eternal salvation. The first man returned to the dust, and drew after him all his posterity. The second man, the Lord from heaven (I Cor 15:47), communicates spiritual and eternal life to his people, and in his resurrection raises them to glory, honour, and immortality.

The creation of all mankind in Adam afforded to Satan a great apparent advantage, in his attempt to ruin the human race. In consequence of this constitution, one successful blow proved fatal to the whole: by leading Adam to rebel, he brought all his posterity under the curse.

The devil perhaps imagined that the success of his scheme, for the introduction of sin into this world, was an earnest of future triumphs; but his career was suddenly arrested by the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, on the throne of which a man was placed, to defeat the schemes of the apostate angel, to execute vengeance on him and all his adherents, and effectually to secure others from the risk of being seduced from their allegiance.

For this end Christ was born. He encountered Satan on his own ground in the world, of which he is god. Long had the strong man kept his house, and his goods were in peace; long had he triumphed over man! But in the fullness of time a stronger than he appeared, and the kingdom of Satan began to fall, like lightning from heaven. He assaulted the second Adam with temptation, but without effect; he stirred up his adherents to aid him in the contest; but they only did what God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done (Acts 4:28). On the cross Christ spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Col 2:15); and having made full atonement for sin by his death, he rose from the dead, and sat down on the throne of his glory. Such was the reward of his obedience; as God, Jesus was equally incapable of humiliation and exaltation; but in our nature he had been despised and persecuted and crucified, and in the same nature he is raised to the throne of the universe. All things in heaven and in earth are put under him; angels, principalities, and powers are made subject to him. He is constituted the Judge of men and angels; the honour of the divine government is entrusted to his care, and he will allot to all their everlasting portion.

When the scripture foretold the bringing into the world the only-begotten Son of God, it said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

Accordingly we have already seen that they waited upon him during his abode on earth. They accompanied him when he ascended up on high; they are now all employed as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation; and they shall attend him on that solemn occasion, when he shall come to execute vengeance on all the enemies of God, and to receive his redeemed into the full enjoyment of that kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Then shall take place the grand consummation for which the world was created; then shall the redeemed among men be completely conformed to their glorious Head, and Christ will present the church to himself, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Then too will he turn the wicked into hell; the devil and his angels shall be cast into the lake of fire prepared for them; and those of the human race who rejected the message of reconciliation, who refused to touch the golden sceptre which the King of righteousness and peace so long held out to them; who, blinded by the god of this world, neglected the great salvation, shall share the doom of him from whom they so obstinately refused to be separated.

Although the word of God gives us no information for the purpose of gratifying curiosity, and only speaks of angels as far as is necessary for our information, enough is said to teach us that the elect-angels, as well as the elect of mankind, are united in one society, under the Son of God. He is not only the head of his body the church, but the head of all principality and power (Col 2:10); and it appears that in virtue of their connection with Christ, the elect angels are now irrevocably secured from evil. The apostle informs us, that it was God's good pleasure to gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth (Eph 1:10); by Christ, to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven (Col 1:20). Hence the whole family in heaven and in earth is said to be named of Christ (Eph 3:15); and hence believers are represented as having come to the new Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Heb 12:22). Thus the faithful, whether Jews or Gentiles, are not only represented as united in one glorious fellowship or society, but as intimately connected with the elect angels, who are also the subjects of Christ. Thus we see creation divided into two great parts. On the one hand, all God's obedient creatures, including the redeemed of mankind, are joined in one family under Christ; and on the other hand, all the enemies of God, including unbelievers, are joined under the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2).

The warfare between the kingdoms of light and darkness is still maintained; but on the great day of Christ's second coming, the

contest shall be for ever terminated, all tears shall then be wiped away from the eyes of God's people, while his enemies shall be cast into everlasting destruction, and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever.

Here let us pause to contemplate the omnipotence of God. Let us observe how Satan was caught in his own snare. He had rebelled, and incurred the displeasure of the Almighty, and he attempted to involve this world in his ruin. He thought he had completely succeeded; by one act of disobedience the whole human race was alienated from God. Perhaps he dreamed of still extending his conquests; but the sin of man, of which he was the author, was the appointed means of putting a final stop to iniquity, of banishing sin from the universe, with the exception of that place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

Thus does God take the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. The schemes of men and devils for opposing his will are made subservient to its accomplishment. The fruit which Satan reaped from his victory over man was, that by a man all his plans should be baffled, and that from the lips of a man he should hear the irreversible sentence, by which he and all his associates shall be for ever shut up in that prison hence they shall never come forth again to molest the creation of God.

Such then is another important end which was to be answered by God in very deed dwelling with men on the earth. By this means a final stop shall be put to the progress of iniquity in the universe; and not only are an innumerable multitude of the lost and guilty and ruined sons of Adam plucked as brands from the burning; but all God's obedient and intelligent creation are eternally secured in their allegiance, while sin receives its due reward, and shall never again be permitted to diffuse its malignant influence. When this glorious consummation is attained, the great end of the mediatorial kingdom shall be accomplished, and then the Son of God will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all (I Cor 15:28).

3. God condescended to dwell with men on the earth, that he might exhibit his character in such a glorious light, as should through eternity increase the happiness of the whole obedient and intelligent creation.

In creation and providence we behold the glory of God, and the greater progress we make in knowledge, the more astonishing do his works appear. We behold the divine power laying the foundations of

the earth, and stretching out the heavens as a tent to dwell in. We perceive the Lord's goodness in providing for the wants of his creatures; and amidst the ruins of the fall, we have ample proofs of his kind beneficence. But the plan of redemption opens to our view a display of the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, knowledge, power, and goodness of God, which affords an inexhaustible subject of delightful contemplation to all the inhabitants of heaven, through the revolving ages of eternity.

God does nothing in vain, nothing merely for the sake of display. An earthly king may surround himself with his guards when there is no danger; he may display his power and wealth to his subjects for the sake of impressing their minds with admiration and awe; but the Majesty of heaven condescends not to employ such means for securing respect. His power is so immense, the glory of his character so surpassing, his works so astonishing, that they are amply sufficient to call forth the highest admiration of his creatures.

Some have spoken of the manifestation of the Son of God, and his atonement for sin, as if it had been intended merely to prove that God views sin with the greatest abhorrence. But the scriptures represent the death of Christ as necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice, independent of the effect which it was to produce on the universe. Man had dishonoured God, had broken his law and come under the curse, and man must endure the righteous penalty. This we have seen was accomplished, and such glory was brought to God by the man who was constituted the head of the new creation, that it was a righteous thing with God, through him, to communicate eternal life to all his people.

But while the chief object of the manifestation of the Son of God, so far as the human race is concerned, was to satisfy divine justice, and to open a channel through which mercy might flow to sinners; God has, by the plan of salvation, given the most astonishing and glorious display of his character. He had evinced his abhorrence of sin in the destruction of the rebel angels, but in pardoning iniquity through the death of his only begotten Son, in bringing again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, an innumerable multitude of the lost race of Adam; in making the success of Satan's temptation of the father of mankind, the means of the final destruction of the arch-apostate, and the complete subversion of his kingdom; God has proved how vain it is to resist his will, and that with him nothing shall be impossible. He has revealed the purity of the divine character in a manner far more striking, than if all mankind had eternally perished, and appears at once the just God and the Saviour,

the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty (Exo 34:6,7).

Since God is the source of happiness, from the contemplation of his glorious character must spring the eternal enjoyment of all his rational creatures, and consequently every new display of the treasures of wisdom, goodness, and power, which are hid in God, must augment the happiness of the whole intelligent creation. This world is but a small part of the universe; had the Lord consumed the earth, and suffered all mankind to perish, the extent of his dominions and the number of his subjects, would not have been sensibly diminished; but he regarded us in our lost estate, he looked, and there was none to help, and he wondered there was none to uphold; therefore his own arm brought salvation to lost and guilty man. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, he made his soul an offering for sin, and thus he proclaimed to the universe that God is love.

So stupendous is the thought of God's dwelling with men on the earth, that eternity will be too short to unfold the mysteries of wisdom and goodness which are included in this event. The angels desire to look into it, it has long been the subject of their contemplation, and through eternity shall they admire the boundless riches of the grace of God in the wonderful plan of man's redemption. We speak of these things as children, we think of them as children, and this arises from the magnitude of the subject. But it required a subject of infinite magnitude to supply matter of eternal contemplation and delight to millions of the human race, and thousands of millions of those glorious spirits who surround the throne. Something new is necessary for our happiness, and were it possible for the grand theme provided by God for ensuring the felicity of his creatures to be exhausted, their enjoyment would immediately terminate. But since God has condescended to dwell with men on the earth, and has purchased the church with his own blood, provision is made, ample and inexhaustible provision, for the growing enjoyment of men and angels for ever.

Such then have been the consequences of God's dwelling with men on the earth, and they are worthy the divine character. On this foundation he has reared the building of mercy in which, as his chosen temple, he will for ever dwell. Compared with the cross of Christ, in all God's other works we behold but the hiding of his power; but in the redemption of fallen man, there is a height, and depth, and breadth, and length, both of wisdom and goodness which passeth knowledge,

and which shall through eternity fill the heavenly mansions with joy and rapture. Still shall the question be asked, What are these which are arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands, and whence came they? And still shall the answer be repeated, These are they which came out of much tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And the reply shall call forth the voice as of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready (Rev 7:13,15; 19:6,7).

The depth of God's condescension in assuming our nature, shall thus be the means, not only of exalting millions of the human race to the rank of the sons of God, and restoring the interrupted harmony of creation, but of exalting the thoughts of men and angels to a height of knowledge, love, and joy, to which they could not otherwise have attained.

The day is not far distant when Christ appearing in his own and his Father's glory with the holy angels, shall swallow up death in victory; and the highest notes of praise shall through eternity arise to God and to the Lamb.

Such is the glorious consummation of the scheme of redemption. Such were the ends which brought the Majesty of heaven down to our world. The happiness of millions of immortal creatures of the race of Adam was an object worthy of the divine benevolence; but the astonishing plan of man's salvation has extended its influence "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills," and shall, through the ceaseless ages of eternity, diffuse love and light, and joy, through the universe.