

be his witnesses, and bade them go and preach his gospel, for he would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world. Such was the face of Christ on earth, and the remembrance may serve to inspire in us a holy parting after the beatific vision which the Lord hath promised us, and of which we are now about to speak as the Holy Ghost may graciously give us utterance.

First, this morning, I propose, brethren, to bring before your minds *the beatific vision itself*—"They shall see his face;" then secondly, we shall dwell for a moment upon *the surpassing clearness of the vision*—"They shall see his face"—in a sense more than usually emphatic; then thirdly, upon *the privileges, choice and precious, which are involved in the vision*; and lastly, we shall have a word or two upon *those favoured ones who shall enjoy the sight*—"They," and none other—"They shall see his face."

I. First, then, **THE BEATIFIC VISION.**

"They shall see his face." It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus. There will be other things to see. Who dare despise those foundations of chrysolite and chrysopterus and jacinth? Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels, and seraphim, and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors, together with those whom we have walked with and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here and dear to us still—"not lost, but gone before." But still; for all this, the main thought which we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fullness of it when we shall come there, is just this: we shall see Jesus. We shall care little for any of those imaginary occupations which have such charms for a certain class of minds that they could even find a heaven in them, I have read fanciful periods in which the writer has found celestial joys to consist in an eternal progress in the knowledge of the laws of God's universe. Such is not my heaven. Knowledge is not happiness, but on the contrary, is often an increase of sorrow.

Knowing, of itself, does not make men happy nor holy. For mere knowing's sake, I would as soon not know as know, if I had my choice: better to love an ounce than to know a pound; better a little service than much knowledge. I desire to know what God pleases to teach me; but beyond that, even ignorance shall be my bliss. Some have talked of flitting from star to star, seeing the wonders of God throughout the universe, how he rules in this province of his wide domain, how he governs in that other region of his vast domain. It may be so, but it would be no heaven to me. So far as I can at present judge, I would rather stop at home, and

sit at the feet of Christ for ever than roam over the wide creation.

"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God,
And thy rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.

Yet in Christ's looks a glory stands,
The noblest wonder of God's hands;
He, in the person of his Son,
Has all his mightiest works outdone."

If Jesus were not infinite we should not speak so; but since he is in his person divine, and as to his manhood, so nearly allied to us that the closest possible sympathy exists between us, there will always be fresh subjects for thought, and fresh sources for enjoyment, for those who are taken up with him. Certainly, brethren and sisters, to no believer would heaven be desirable if Jesus were not there, or, if being there, they could not enjoy the nearest and dearest fellowship with him. A sight of him first turned our sorrow into joy; renewed communion with him lifts us above our present cares, and strengthens us to bear our heavy burdens: what must heavenly communion be? When we have Christ with us we are content on a crust, and satisfied with a cup of water; but if his face be hidden the whole world cannot afford a solace, we are widowed of our Beloved, our sun has set, our moon is eclipsed, our candle is blown out. Christ is all and all to us here, and therefore we pant and long for a heaven in which he shall be all in all to us for ever; and such will the heaven of God be. The Paradise of God is not the Elysium of imagination, the Utopia of intellect, or the Eden of poetry; but it is the heaven of intense spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus—a place where it is promised to faithful souls that "they shall see his face."

In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see; and further, it is his *face* which they behold. They shall not see the skirts of his robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of his garment, or to sit far down at his feet where they can only see his sandals, but they "shall see his face;" by which I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand him, his work, his love, his all in all, as they never understood him before. They shall literally, I say, see his face, for Christ is no phantom; and in heaven though divine, and therefore spiritual, he is still a man, and therefore material like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven; the hand that was pierced with the nail now at this moment grasps the sceptre of all worlds; that very head which was bowed down with anguish is now crowned with a royal diadem;