

## Sabbath Readings.

### CHRIST'S LIFE IN HEAVEN.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Rev. i. 18.

One might have thought that after Christ had received such malignant treatment on this earth, His departure from it would be an everlasting termination of all His communications with it; that His last word on earth to men would be His last word to them until the day of doom; that on His ascension to heaven He would withdraw Himself with a righteous indignation from this corrupt planet; turn away from it, and speak only to intelligences who would devoutly hail His every utterance. Not so, however. Here, after threescore years of personal absence from this earth, with unabated love for our fallen race, He breaks the silence of eternity, and makes such communications to John on the Isle of Patmos as would be for the good of all coming generations. The text leads us to consider *His life in heaven*.

I. *His life in heaven is a life that succeeds an extraordinary death.* "Was dead." Life after death at all, is a life in itself truly wonderful. Such a life we have never seen. But the life of Christ in heaven is a life succeeding a death that has no parallel in the history of the universe. There are at least three circumstances that mark off His death at an infinite distance from that of any other being that ever has died. First: *Absolute spontaneity.* No being ever died but Christ who had the feeling that he need never die,—that death could be for ever escaped. Christ had it. "He had power to lay down his life," &c. Secondly: *Entire relativity.* Every other man that ever died, died for himself, died because he was a sinner, and the seed of death was sown in his nature. Not so with Christ.—He died for others. "He was bruised for our iniquities," &c. Thirdly: *Universal influence.* The death of the most important man that ever lived has an influence of a comparatively limited degree. It extends but over a contracted circle. Only a few of the age feel it, future ages feel it not; it is nothing to the universe. But Christ's death had an influence that admits of no measurement. It extended over all the past of humanity. It was the great event anticipated by the ages that preceded it. It extends over all the ages that succeeded it. It is the great event that will be looked back to by all coming men. It thrills the heavens of God. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," is the song of eternity. Christ's death fell on the universe as the pebble on the centre of a lake, widening in circles of influence on to its utmost boundary.

II. *His life in heaven is a life of endless duration.* "I am alive for evermore." First: His endless duration is a *necessity of His nature.* "I am he that liveth." There are moral intelligences,—we amongst them,—that may live for ever, but not by necessity of nature. We live because the Infinite supports us: let Him withdraw His sustaining agency, and we cease

to breathe. Not so with Christ. His life is *absolutely* independent of the universe. He is the "I AM." Hence He says, "I am He that liveth." Secondly: His endless duration is the *glory of the good.* "Amen." When Christ says, "I am alive for evermore," the unfallen and redeemed universe may well exclaim, "Amen." Whatever other friends die, the great Friend liveth on. "The same yesterday," &c.

III. *His life in heaven is a life of absolute dominion over the destinies of men.* "I have the keys of hell and of death,"—the grave and *Hades.* He has dominion over the bodies and souls of men as well when they are separated from each other, as previous to their dissolution. "He is the Lord of the dead and of the living." From His absolute dominion over the destinies of men, four things may be inferred. First: There is nothing accidental in human history. He has "the key" of death. No grave is opened but by His hand. Secondly: Departed men are still in existence. He has the key of *Hades* (the world of separate souls), as well as of the grave. They live, therefore, for "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Thirdly: Death is not the introduction to a new moral kingdom. The same Lord is here as there. What is right here, therefore, is right there, and the reverse. Fourthly: We may anticipate the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory. "He has the key of the grave," &c.

### THE DOOR OF MERCY KEPT OPEN, UNTIL IT IS SHUT BY DEATH.

"Blessed are the dead which in the Lord."  
REV. xiv. 13.

The article of death is the turning-point. It is the last step of this life that determines the whole course of the next. Those who are in the Lord when they depart, are with the Lord for ever. Two aged men pass from this world on the same day, and enter together the mansions of the Father's house. Meeting in the general assembly of the just made perfect, they compare notes of their experience on earth. One, it appears, had been secretly renewed at a period earlier than memory could reach, and had walked with God from the first dawning of his mind till the hour of his departure at fourscore. The other had lived in pleasure and rejected Christ, until he was on the brink of the grave, and had at last been melted by the power of redeeming love a little before he was called away. While these two saved sinners both alike ascribe all to the merciful love of their Saviour, each counts his own case the greater exercise of mercy—the greater boon to the receiving man, and the greater glory to the giving God. He who was won in early childhood, and moulded from the first into conformity with the Divine will, thinks his own debt deepest, because the Lord in sovereign goodness not only gave him the eternal life, but also spared him the miseries of a rebellious earthly