

LORD JESUS, COME.

Rough is the wilderness,
 Barren and drear ;
 Pleasure or happiness,
 Who would seek here ?
There, where the Saviour is,
 Is our blest home ;
 Longing, our spirits cry,
 " Lord Jesus, come !"

We, of the Spirit born,
 Seal'd as God's own,
 Passing the desert through,
 Cannot but groan,
 Jesus while waiting for,
 Far from our home,
 Can we forbear to say,
 " Lord Jesus, come !"

Soon shall we see Thy face,
 Know as we are known ;
 Glory shall crown Thy grace,
 There on Thy throne.
 We, then, encircling Thee,
 No more shall roam ;
 Till then our cry shall be,
 " Lord Jesus, come !"

" I JESUS . . . am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come . . . Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus."—
 REV. xxii. 16, 17, 20.

THE RED SEA AND THE WILDERNESS.

EXODUS XV.

It is easy to understand Israel's distress—the sea before shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing, so that they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Although, as we see, they had cried to the Lord, they had not in their hearts reckoned on His delivering them. It must, therefore, have been a wondrous thing to them when God was so publicly manifested to be on their side. And so is it with our hearts, when thus tested with trial on every side; shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances, instead of calculating upon the God who is above them either to sustain us under them or deliver from them.

Israel was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, etc., till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. Afterwards, through their folly in putting themselves under the law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In the sixteenth chapter, when they murmured for food, God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on

the ground of perfect grace. But afterwards, when they again murmured for flesh (being then under law), we read that, while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague. But God would first have them know how entirely bent He was on doing them good, bad as they might be.

It is well to distinguish, for our soul's profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the Gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out towards Himself; but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ, on the other side of death and the judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he feels his own weakness. The joy of chapter xv. is, that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt, and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. A very different thing from the joy of the Passover—being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover Jehovah had made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the door-posts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing—even God coming in strength

as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment, the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death, and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them for ever. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly, as a Judge, is become their salvation. They are redeemed; no longer were hoping for mercy, but able to rejoice that judgment was past, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation—to God Himself; in the light as He is in the light; and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first; be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may

groan under his yoke, and sigh to be delivered from it ; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer : it is a full, conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh ; and they can count on God's power for all the rest. "The people shall hear and be afraid, the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." (Ver. 15, 16.) Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up, and putting them in His own presence.

"Thou shalt plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." (Ver. 17.) This was yet to be done ; but they were already with Him in His holy habitation—not *theirs* but *His*. And thus are we in His presence, brought *to God*, though not yet in the place prepared for us on high. So, in Ephesians i., the apostle prays "that they may know what is the hope of *His* calling, and the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints." It was God's land they were to dwell in—the Father's house in which our home shall be. It is His glory, and He will bring us unto it. No fear of the enemies by the way : to faith they are powerless. Full confidence belongs to redemption. Is it, then, as men would say, all plain sailing now ? In no wise. It is the wilderness, and there is no water ; and, mark, it was by the Lord's command they pitched in Rephidim.

Does this make redemption uncertain ? Not at

all. Yet it is a dreadful thing to have no water ; it was certain death in those countries. Had He then brought them through the Red Sea and unto Himself to kill them with thirst ! When at length they did come to water, it was bitter. But this was to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The bitter water did not show what was in God's heart (redemption had shown that) ; but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. They must drink into the power of death. Being redeemed for ever, they must learn that there is nothing for them in the wilderness. All supply must be from God Himself. This is the very effect of redemption, and there is so much in us to be brought out and corrected. But He makes the water sweet.

We must all learn death (being redeemed we have life) and it cannot be learnt in Egypt. They had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, to one's own will ; and all this is very trying. A person might be tempted to say, all this trial comes upon me because I have not redemption. Not so ; it is just because you are redeemed. We may seek to avoid the bitter waters of Marah. but God will bring us to them. He must break down all that is of the old man, and then, in His own good time, He will put in that which sweetens all. But because God has brought me to Himself, He is putting His finger on everything (be it love of the world,

setting up self, my own will, or whatever it may be) that hinders complete dependence on Him, or my soul's full enjoyment of Himself. But count it not strange, though it be a fiery trial which is to try you; for as surely as you are redeemed, so will He break down your own will. Yes, beloved, God will make you drink of the very thing (death) that redeemed you.

And now Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them.

He gave them statutes, etc. He did not do so before He had redeemed them. They had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God, and now they learn God in a new character—"the Lord that healeth." A different thing from His promise, that if obedient He would bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They are exercised by God, but it is that they may know Him as the Healer; it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before God. We cannot escape it. He will so order circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes we are humbled before men: this is very trying, very bitter water; but then, what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify one-self! As soon as the tree (the cross) is in the waters, they refresh the soul. This is joy in tribulation. Joy in redemption first, but now in the healing. First, God makes us to sing in the knowledge of redemption; and then, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption,

which is the enjoyment of *God* Himself in our souls, the flesh, which would always hinder this, must be broken down in whatever form it works. It was to prove them. God knew what was in their hearts; but they did not, and they must learn it.

After this they come to Elim. Now they experience the natural consequences of being with God—the full streams of refreshment—as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of their dependence on the Lord for everything, and nature would have been unbroken. But trial produces dependence, and dependence, communion. It is only for this that He delays, for He delights in blessing His people. The numbers 12 and 70 are different figures of perfection, : perfect refreshment, perfect shelter, and all this in the wilderness, and rest then.

They must be exercised at Marah, that they may fully know and enjoy Him at Elim. Redemption brought them indeed *to* God, but now it is joy *in* God. And so it is with us. Although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. But whatever trial we are in, however deeply we may have to drink into death, there is resurrection as well as death; and when we see God's hand in it—when we see the cross of Christ in the bitter waters—we understand God's mind and purpose in them, and they become sweet to us.

We cannot walk in the way of faith without faith, so we must be put to the test. Not that, for the present, tribulation seems joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits unto them that are exercised thereby. Flesh is not faith. If I lose my trust in God for one minute, that very minute the flesh comes in, under some form or other. Whenever I feel perplexed, at a loss, the eye is not single; it shows I am out of communion, otherwise I should know what to do. If the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light. Or there is something yet to be detected in us, something we have not yet found out in our own hearts. It may not be wilful sin; but there is something He will exercise our hearts about, something as to which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus we learn to rejoice in tribulation also, and then to rejoice in God—finding springs of joy, refreshings in the wilderness in that God who brought us there. Let us, then, not count trial a strange thing; for we know its purpose, even that we may joy in God Himself.



In our service for Christ, we commonly resemble scholars who display an immense diligence in tracing a quantity of lines, among which the master's eye will with difficulty accept two or three passably good uprights. Thank God we have to do with One who will recognize all He can.

"GOD—I."

Faith sets a man with God, and, as an individual, alone with God. Abel acted as an individual; Enoch walked alone with God; Noah found grace in His sight; Abram was called out from all, and was the friend of God. Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Daniel, and all the worthies of Faith's household, each found his springs to be in God—and his guidance to be from God.

How individual and solitary, too (not only on the ground of His being the only sinless, the only perfect One, but also in *the mode* of His walk), was the Blessed Lord! "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God." "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" These were the mottoes of His life here below.

How beautifully, too, in the thief upon the cross, do we find his faith (divinely taught) setting Him *alone* with God—able to condemn, not only his own past course, but all that the religious of that day were doing; and able to give to Christ a title true of him *alone* from among men. "This man hath done nothing amiss." He adds, "Lord! remember me . . . in Thy kingdom!" And the Lord's word to Peter is to be noted: "If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, *what is that to thee?* FOLLOW THOU ME."

The secret of all practical holiness in a believer is found in this individual walk with God—a walk which, as it keeps him in the light, where Christ

is at the right hand of God, keeps him in humble self-judgment, because he sees the contrast between Christ and himself—yet in firmness, because he has to do with God, and acts *for* and *from* God.

Directly I can say, God's word proclaims a thing to be unholy, I am to cease from it *at once*. It is unholy to *me* at least, and to tamper with it would be defilement. Every godly soul (that knows even Rom. xiv.) would assent to this : every godly soul must say, "Obey God rather than man ; obey God according to your light, and do not go beyond it."

I have been asked (alas for the askers !) when so acting, "Are *you* infallible ? Are *you* going to lord it over the conscience of others ?" My answer is simple : "I walk with God, and judge *myself* ; not an inch for me on the road God's word seems to me to prohibit ; right onward where the word enjoins me to go forward."

'Tis replied, "How do you know *you* are right ?" I answer, "While walking in dependence upon God alone to lead me to see His mind, that I may do it—do you think He'll not be faithful to Himself ? (John vii. 17). And, as to the consciences of others, I lord it over no soul. Let each walk with God ; but only let each remember, that if my walk is with God, alas ! for him whose walk is not in the same pathway : be he before me or behind."

There is no holiness in communion—no "com-

munion of *saints*," apart from this solitary walk with God—of the saints as individuals.

The restless disquietude of many around, convinces me *they* are not walking with God.



MY GOD MY SALVATION.

God hath, as it were, made Himself over to believers. Job doth not say, God will give or bestow salvation upon me, but he saith, "He shall be my salvation."

It is God Himself who is the salvation and the portion of His people. They would not care much for salvation if God were not their salvation. It more pleaseth the saints that they enjoy God than that they enjoy salvation. False and carnal spirits will express a great deal of desire after salvation. O, they like salvation, heaven, and glory very well ; but they never express any longing desire after God and Jesus Christ. They love salvation, but they care not for a Saviour. Now that which faith pitcheth most upon is God Himself. He shall be my salvation : let me have Him, and there is salvation enough. *He is my life*, He is my comfort, He is my riches, He is my honour, and He is my all.

Thus David's heart acted immediately upon God. (Ps. xviii. 1, 2.) It pleaseth holy David more that God was his strength than that God gave Him strength—that God was his Deliv-

erer than that he was delivered—that God was his fortress, his buckler, his horn, his high tower, than that He gave him the effect of all these. It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints more, that God is their salvation (whether temporal or eternal) than that He saves them. The saints look more at God than at all that is God's.

They say, We desire not Thine, but Thee ; or, Nothing of Thine like Thee. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" saith David again (Ps. lxxiii. 25). What are saints, what are angels, to a soul without God? 'Tis true of things as well as of persons. What have we in heaven but God? What is joy without God ; what is glory without God ; what is all the furniture and riches, all *delicates*, yea, and all the diadems of heaven, without the God of heaven ?

If God should say to the saints, "Here is heaven, take it amongst you, but I will withdraw myself," how would they weep over heaven itself, and make it a Bacca—a valley of tears indeed ! Heaven is not heaven unless we enjoy God. 'Tis the presence of God which makes heaven. Glory is but our nearest being unto God (our being nearest to God). As Mephibosheth replied when David told him (2 Sam. xix.), "I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land : " "Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house," where I may enjoy him. So if God should say to the saints, "Take heaven amongst you," and withdraw Himself, they would soon say,

“Nay; let the world take heaven if they will, let them take glory if they will; if we may not have Thee in heaven, heaven would be but an earth, or rather but a hell to us.” That which saints rejoice in is that they may be in the presence of God—that they may sit at His table and eat bread with Him—that is, that they may be near Him constantly, which was Mephibosheth’s privilege with David. That’s the thing, say they, which they desire, and which their souls thirst after—that’s the wine they would drink.

“My soul (saith David) thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” He spake this in the greatness and heat of his zeal to enjoy God in the ordinances of His public worship. How much more was his soul on fire to enjoy God when he should be above ordinances! The usual saying of Christians is, “Come let us go to prayer,” or “Let us go to church.” We should rather say, “Come let us go to God.”

We should prize duties no farther than as we obey and enjoy God in doing them. Nor should we prize heaven itself farther than as we shall have there a more full and perfect enjoyment of God. Salvation itself were no salvation without the God of salvation. “He also shall be my salvation.”

(From an Old Book, 1652.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 20.)

CHAPTERS I-III, 4.

INTRODUCTION.

The condition of Israel at the time of Joshua's death.

(I. 1-16.)

Chap. i. 1-16 may be considered as a preface to the book of Judges, and the words, "Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass," are the key to the whole book. It is not as yet, properly speaking, declension, but that which precedes it. What follows is governed by the fact, that Joshua, a type of the Spirit of Christ in power, was no longer in the midst of Israel. So also, in the church's history, the unhindered activity of the Spirit of God lasted but a short time. No doubt, as in the days of "the elders that outlived Joshua" (ii. 7), the presence of the apostles stayed the tide of evil; but in both cases, the presence and working of certain deleterious principles, caused it to be foreseen, that when once the obstacle should be removed, the tide of declension would set in.

All was apparently going on well in Israel. The tribes take their several places in presence of a hostile world. They enquire of Jehovah, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first? God says: "Judah shall go up, behold I have delivered the land into his hand." (v. 1, 2.) The answer was plain, Judah could count implicitly on

God's faithfulness to His promise ; but already we see that the simplicity of faith was lacking in him, and that his dependence on Jehovah was not so real as it appeared to be. "And Judah said unto Simeon, his brother, come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites ; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him." (v. 3.) Judah seems to mistrust his own strength ; but, instead of finding his resource in the God of Israel, he seeks it in Simeon, and in reality lacks confidence in Jehovah. True, he does not ally himself with the enemies of God ; if his faith fails, he turns to his brother Simeon, only to his brother ; but, nevertheless, under the pretext of pushing forward the work of God, we see, in principle, the dawn of human associations and alliances, which have become the ruling feature of all the present activity in Christendom. Did God require Simeon, in order to give Judah the lot of his inheritance ?

The result of this combined action was apparently magnificent. We learn from Joshua xix. 9 that "the part of the children of Judah was too much for them." But the inheritance of the children of Simeon was not the best, for it was taken from what Judah could not keep ; thus they received their portion out of that which was superfluous to another, at the southern limit of the land of Israel, in the border which looked towards the desert. It was not that God disowned either tribe, for it is written (v. 4), "the Lord delivered

the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand ;" but warfare undertaken on the footing of a *human* alliance, bears more or less the imprint of its origin. The allies seize upon Adoni-bezek and "cut off his thumbs and his great toes." (v. 6.) This was not what God commanded of old, nor what Joshua did to the kings of Jericho, of Ai, of Jerusalem, of Makkedah, and all the kings of the mountain and of the plain. To mutilate the enemy was simply human retaliation. It had been, likewise, the custom of Adoni-bezek thus to humble his enemies ; keeping them, however, at his court, as their presence served to increase his glory as conqueror. We see similar things in the church's history. How many times she has made a show of past victories to exalt herself in her own eyes and those of others. The conscience of a humbled foe is often more accessible than that of the people of God in prosperity. Adoni-bezek smitten by Judah, acknowledges having acted wrongly towards the vanquished kings, and bows to the judgment of God.

"And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba) and they slew Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir : and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher " (v. 10, 11). Joshua xv. 14, 15, ascribes to Caleb what our chapter attributes to Judah. Caleb's energy, perseverance and faith on this occasion were such

that his whole tribe bore the imprint of it. In the early days of the church it was not so, when all were of one heart and soul, and advanced with oneness of faith towards the goal. The coming to the front of individual faith is manifested far more distinctly in the course of the history of the judges raised up to deliver Israel; we see it, too, in the revivals which God works in our days; and while it is encouraging for the individual, it is humbling for the rest. What an honour for Caleb, that Judah should have gained the victory! On the other hand, let us not forget that each one of us may help to imprint weakness on the people of God as a whole. God grant that the church, though unfaithful, may have many Calebs in her midst to-day.

There is further encouragement to be gathered from the history of this man of God. Individual faithfulness, even in the most corrupt days of the church, arouses and stimulates spiritual energy in others. Othniel, seeing Caleb's faith, is stirred up to act likewise. He serves his first campaign under him, and acquires for himself a good degree, for he becomes the first judge in Israel. But he is not satisfied with belonging to Caleb's family; he fights for the enjoyment of a new *relationship*, that of the bridegroom with the bride, and he gets Achsah to wife. Joshua xv. relates the fact in the same terms, for individual faith enjoys the same privileges as fully in a time of declension as in the brightest day of the church's history. The church

has been unfaithful and has lost the sense of her relationship with Him, who, by His victory had acquired it for Himself; but this relationship may be known and enjoyed to-day in its fulness by every one who is faithful.

This union gave Othniel a *personal possession* in the inheritance of him whose son he had become, and he had thenceforth an estate of his own. Our portion resembles his; we realize our heavenly position when we have taken our stand as regards the world, our hearts being attached to the person of Christ. Still this precious domain does not suffice to Achsah. The south land would be a barren field to her if her father did not give springs to water it. Achsah obtained the upper and the nether springs, just as in different circumstances, the saint passing through the valley of Baca, on the one hand makes it a well, and on the other sees rain from heaven filling the pools. Achsah is a thirsty soul, but she thirsts for Canaan's blessings. A Christian coveting the world is in a terrible condition, but God approves of and delights in one who thirsts for heaven. He satisfies such longings by copious springs, spiritual blessings which descend upon us and flow out from us. Those who covet the world, He visits with chastisements such as fell on Achan when he coveted the accursed thing.

The sixteenth verse, which closes this first division of the book, tells us of "the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law." The history of

this family, come out of Midian and allied to Moses, is full of interest. When Jethro returned to his own land, after having visited Israel in the desert (Ex. xviii. 27), Moses asked his son Hobab to be to the children of Israel instead of eyes, to lead them in their encampments in the wilderness (Numbers x. 29-32); and in spite of his refusal, his sons, like Caleb, faithfully followed in the steps of the people of God. (Judges iv. 11, 1 Sam. xv. 6.) Like Rahab, these children of a stranger amongst the nations, went up out of Jericho, the city of palm trees (i. 16, c. f., Deut. xxxiv. 3), to cast in their lot with Israel. In cleaving permanently to Judah, they resembled Ruth. And like Othniel, they allied themselves with the family of Caleb, and out of it they had more especially for their chief, the faithful Jabez, the son of sorrow, who made his requests with understanding to the God of Israel, and to whom God granted that which he asked (1 Chron. ii. 50-55, iv. 9, 10). The Rechabites were descended from the Kenites (1 Chron. ii. 55, 2 Kings x. 15, Jer. xxxv.), and when their history closes in the Bible, they are praised as true Nazarites in the midst of the ruin of Israel. But alas! this faithful remnant come out from amongst the nations, plays its part also in the book of declension. We have an instance of it in Heber, the Kenite, in ch. iv. I cannot refrain from applying this history of the Kenites to the church called out from amidst the nations. Her testimony, too, is gone, but like the sons of Rechab amongst the Israelites, a faithful remnant in the midst of the ruin, can go on to the end in holy separation from evil, obeying the Word committed to them by their Leader.

(To be continued, D.V.)