

## THE MAN WITH A MEASURING LINE.

EZEKIEL XLVII. 1-10, 11.

I call attention to this Scripture for two purposes. It will only take a few moments to explain the first, the second will occupy the remainder of this paper. Of these verses I want to form a scriptural platform upon which to erect a pyramid of Scripture taken from the New Testament. This chapter speaks of mysterious waters which issue forth from the temple, and flow through the Dead Sea, healing the waters. This will not be fulfilled until the millennium, when the Jews are restored to their land. It is of this time alone that the chapter treats. Scripture has only one interpretation, but it has many applications.

Now, as I said before, this Scripture applies to the millennium, when all Israel shall be restored; for they shall be brought back again to the land of their fathers. If you turn to chapter xxxvii. 21, 22, you will find this very plainly stated: "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone . . . . and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." When the Lord brings them back, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel shall be united, and they shall

have *one* king. It is the Lord Jesus who shall be King in that day. And then these mysterious waters shall flow through the Dead Sea, healing its waters, so that there shall be a very great multitude of fishes where now there are none, and there shall be fertility where now there is sterility. Wherever these fertilizing waters flow, they shall bring life and blessing with them.

Now I turn from what this Scripture teaches to what it does not teach, but suggests. These mysterious waters are, to me, a beautiful type, or rather figure, of the love of God. They flow from the throne of God. (Rev. xxii. 1.) Verse 3: "And when *the man* who had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he *measured* a thousand cubits," etc. Here we get "*the man*" who can measure the love of God. Who is He? There is only *one* man who is able to measure the love of God, and I turn you to the New Testament in order to introduce you to Him. Perhaps you think it strange to hear me call the Lord Jesus a *man*, but Scripture calls Him so. He, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. ii. 6), "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 18), became man in order to make the love of God known unto us, as well as to make atonement. Turn to 1 Tim. ii. 5, and allow me to introduce you to "*the Man*" whose prerogative it is to measure the love of God. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus." Job said,

“Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that *he might lay his hand upon us both.*” Well, here He is in 1 Tim. ii. 5. Here is the One for whom Job longed to go between him and God, and to bring them together; and He has measured the distance that was between God and man by (if I might so express it) laying His right hand of divinity upon the throne of God, and His left hand of humanity upon man. The Man Christ Jesus is the *only* Mediator between God and man. It is He alone who can measure the love of God, and it is He alone who can conduct us into the love of God, as the man in Ezekiel brought the prophet into the river.

Turn to 2 Thess. iii. 5, “*And the Lord direct your hearts [not your heads] into the love of God.*” Not into our love to God, but into His love to us. Surely if we love Him, it is because He *first* loved us; and it is on His love to us that we should dwell, not on our poor love to Him. We must be brought into the love of God by Christ. Oh, beloved reader, will you let the Lord Jesus *bring* you into the fathomless, shoreless river of God’s love? Mark, it does not say that the prophet followed the man. Oh, no; the man brought him through! Now put your poor, tiny, feeble hands into the great, mighty, loving hand of the Lord Jesus, and let Him bring you into the fathomless, shoreless ocean of God’s love.

Verse 3: “And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a

thousand cubits, and he *brought* me through the waters ; the waters were to the ancles." Now what does this teach ? Turn to John iii. 16 : " God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Do you know God's love to you a lost sinner ? Have you believed in the One whom He has sent in His wondrous love to save you ? If so, you have been brought through the waters to your ancles ; but you should not stop there. It is indeed a blessed thing to be to the ancles in the waters ; for it means that you have left the shore on which judgment rested, and that you are *now* in the fathomless, shoreless river of God's love, *never* to return to the shore again, never again to be in the place of judgment. But is there nothing better, or, I should say, in advance of this ? Surely it is a blessed thing to know the love of God to the world, but we should not stop there. I know that there are many of God's dear children who never get past their ancles, as it were, in His love. I was speaking lately to a man who told me that he was forty years converted. I asked him what was the best thing he knew ? He said, " God so loved the world," etc. Now he had known the Lord for forty years, yet he had never got past his ancles. I feel very much grieved to find that ninety-five out of every hundred of God's children that I meet have not got past the love of God to the world : and why is it so ? Because they do not

leave their hands in the Lord's, and let Him conduct them through the waters.

Now having got to your ankles in the waters, let Him bring you through the second thousand cubits—"Again He measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees." Now surely this is in advance of the first thousand cubits. Turn to John xvi. 26, 27: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: FOR THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU . . . because ye have believed that I came out from God." Is not this better than John iii. 16? Here we get the love of the Father, which brings in relationship. God loves the world; but His love to His children is something deeper, something in advance of it—"At that day, etc.," when the Holy Ghost would be given. We know that ten days after the ascension of Christ the Holy Ghost was given to dwell in every child of God. It is the Spirit who has taught us to cry, "Abba, Father." "And *because* ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Oh, do you know that you have a Father in heaven who loves you Himself, and who cares for you as you go through the world? People have a notion that they must go to Jesus, and get Him to go to the Father for them; but this is not the case. The Lord says, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you: *for the Father Himself loveth you.*" You can go

straight with boldness to the Father, and say, "Father," that sweet name that the Spirit has taught us to call Him by. Jehovah, the Lord God Almighty, is *our* Father. Is not this in advance of His love to the world? But there is something better still. Now if you have got up to your knees in His love do not stop there. Let the Man bring you through the third thousand cubits—"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins." Here the waters are to the loins. Now what is this? Turn to John xvii. 22, 23: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and HAST LOVED THEM, AS THOU HAST LOVED ME." Is not this in advance of the second thousand cubits? There we learn that the Father Himself loves us; but here we get the measure of the love.

People speak of the Jewish disciple's prayer as if it were the Lord's Prayer; in fact they call it the Lord's Prayer, but it is not. This 17th chapter of John is the Lord's Prayer, and He allows us to stand by, as it were, and hear Him speak to His Father. Is not this wonderful? John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. This was in advance of all that went before, and it expressed dependence on, and confidence in, God. Jesus' disciples asked Him to give them a prayer, as John gave his disciples. Jesus did give them a form o'

prayer, which was much in advance of John's, and which suited their condition at the time it was given. It was a prayer to be used by them during the transitional state before the coming of the Holy Ghost. That this prayer was not to continue we know; for prayer now is to be in the name of Jesus, and this one is not. John xvi. 24 plainly tells us so—"Hitherto have ye asked *nothing in my name*: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." If the prayer which He had given to them had been in the name of Jesus, He would not have said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." The Holy Ghost is now in us to give us the knowledge of our relationship, and to teach us how to pray to our Father (Rom. viii. 16, 26).

Now what is the measure of the Father's love to us? "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and *hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*" How does the Father love the Son? Well, such is His love to us—

"So dear, so very dear to God,  
*More dear I cannot be;*  
 The love wherewith *He loves the Son,*  
*Such is His Love for me.*"

Can the Father *ever love* the Son *more?* or *will He ever love Him less?* Never. Well, His love to us is so great that He *can never* love us more, and He will *never* love us less.

And now, having been brought through the three thousand cubits, let us go through the

fourth—"Afterward he measured a thousand ; and it was a river that I could not pass over : for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed." Turn to I John iv. 16 : "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and *he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him.*" Surely this is in advance of all that went before. "He that dwelleth *in love*"—God's love to us, not our love to Him—"dwelleth in God, and God *in him.*" Is not this water to swim in ? It takes us completely off our feet, and puts us on our faces before Him in praise and worship. We are ashamed to think of our poor feeble love. It is only by dwelling on His love that we can love Him. The love is there, but it comes from Him, just as if you were to dip a bucket in the ocean, and having filled it cast it back again ; the bucket-ful is there, but it is not to be seen ; it is lost in the ocean. So with our hearts full of love—it is lost in the fathomless, shoreless ocean of His love.

The Lord keep us, beloved, ever dwelling in that love which we cannot fathom or understand, but can enjoy. Then our praises shall rise unhindered to God, as the bird on the wing soars up with its breast full of song.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this ? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the



other." Having been in the deep waters, we find them going back again towards the shore.

Now I have taken it for granted that you have put your hands into the large loving hand of the Lord Jesus, and that you have let Him conduct you through the waters of God's love, until you have been completely taken off your feet and put upon your face to praise and adore Him, and enjoy the fulness of His love.

Now we shall go back towards the shore again. "And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi, even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many." Here we read of *fishers* and of *fish*. What do these mean? Turn to Matt. iv. 19, which will explain the passage, "And He" (Jesus) "said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you *fishers of men*." This is service for the Lord. The Lord has sent some of us to fish for Him—to gather in souls. But he does not send us until first we have been in the full enjoyment of God's love, until we have been taken off our feet and put upon our faces in worship, then, free from ourselves, we are in the condition to tell others of that love.

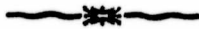
It is for the Master we are to fish, and at the close of each day we should have some fish for Him in our baskets, as it were. When I go to my Master after the day with no fish for Him in my basket, I feel quite ashamed before Him, and

say, "Master, I have not a single fish for Thee in my basket. There is something wrong with me, or I should have fish for Thee." Why is it that there are so few fish caught for the Master now? I believe it is because we often put ourselves in the front, instead of Christ. There is a story of a little boy who was fishing in one of the rivers of Scotland with a rod and line of the rudest construction. A gentleman from London was also there, whose fishing tackle was of the most perfect kind. Though he tried hard all day, his basket lay there empty, for he did not succeed in catching a single trout. He came up to the boy; and when he saw how quickly he was catching the most beautiful trout, he said, "How is this? I have been trying all day, and I have not had a single bite." "I ken ye don't hide yer sel'," said the boy. "Your shadow is on the water, and it frightens the fish. I hide behind the trees." Yes, that is the secret. We often forget the Lord's way of making us fishers. He says, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" We should follow, not go before Him; then He will be in front, and we shall be hid. We should preach Christ, and not ourselves; we should seek to win souls for Christ, and not for ourselves (see 2 Cor. iv. 5 & 7).

Verse 12: "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring

forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof shall be for medicine." Here we get fruit-bearing. Now we are not all called to be fishers, but we are all called to bear fruit for the glory of God. Turn to John xv. 16—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and *ordained you*, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." My brother, my sister, in Christ, you are each ordained to bring forth fruit for God, not for yourselves. Trees bear fruit noiselessly, and the fruit is not for themselves, but for the owner. Now some child of God may say, "I do not know what fruit I can bear for God ; for I have no gift for preaching or teaching." You do not require gift. The smallest act done *for Him* God accepts as fruit. Another may say, "I am not rich, and cannot minister to God's work." "Stop, did you ask anyone to come to the gospel meeting?" "Yes, I asked one poor woman, but she has seven children, and she could not leave them." "Did you offer to take charge of the children for her, so that she might get out to hear the gospel?" "No, I never thought of that." Well, you lost an opportunity of bearing fruit for God. Oh, what a selfish heart, not to give up a meeting in order that a poor perishing soul might hear the gospel! If you are on the watch, you will find many opportunities of bearing fruit ; for love is inventive, and, as one has said,

“Love delights to serve, selfishness to be served.”  
 “Neither shall the *fruit thereof* be consumed.” “I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that *your fruit should remain.*” The fruit will not decay through eternity. I believe that the Lord takes notice of the least bit of fruit borne for Him, and He will reward it. There are many hidden acts known only to God; it may be some child of God sitting by the death-bed of a poor obscure saint to-night, moistening the parched lips or wiping the death-dew from the brow, that the Lord will count as far higher service than preaching the gospel. It is well to remember that (as another has said) “faithfulness in trial and temptation shows the power of the Spirit, as much as the energy of action.”



## THE TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

2 CORINTHIANS IV.

SCRIPTURE speaks of man in his natural state in *two* ways. *Alive* in sins, as in Romans; and *dead* in sins, as in Ephesians. As to sins, and as having sinful lusts, man is alive enough. Plenty of activity and energy for self-pleasing, and for sin, but nothing for God. Every vanity, amusement, dress, or what not, preferred to God. For sin, he is *alive*; for God, *dead*: “Dead in trespasses and sins.” It is the same condition, only looked at in different aspects; and in order to

deliverance from this condition two things are needed. As *dead* in sins, he must be quickened: it is a "new creation" that is necessary. As *alive* in sins, death must come in: he must die. There is no other remedy or way of deliverance before God, but death. This side of the truth we get in Romans, where the death of Christ is presented as meeting man's *guilt*; and death *with* Christ, as the deliverance from our state.

Romans vi. 2-11. When a man is dead you cannot say he has evil lusts and passions, or a will of his own. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," etc. There is no remedy for being alive in sins but death. Ephesians gives us the other side of the truth: there we are seen as "*dead* in trespasses and sins," and God quickens, and raises us up together with Christ (Chap. ii.). It is an entirely new creation. Colossians gives both aspects. (Chap. ii. 11-13.) As *alive* in sins we have died with Christ, and are buried with Him, as in Romans; thus getting clear of the *state* we were in, for we have died out of it, and are brought into a new place in righteousness, by virtue of Christ's resurrection. As *dead* in sins we are quickened together with Him, as also taught in Ephesians. Thus the Epistle to the Colossians goes, as it were, between the two. We are taken farther than in Romans; because in chapter iii. we are spoken of as being *raised* with Him, which Romans does not teach. But it does not present us as *seated* in Christ in

the heavenly places, as Ephesians does. It directs us to Christ as there, and tells us to seek those things which are above, "where *Christ* sitteth."

Now all this, and more, was revealed to Paul, and declared by him in the gospel he preached. There was no veil on the glory of God, as in Moses' case: if hid, it was in the minds of unbelievers; the effort and work of Satan to blind men's minds to it. In verse 4, "Blinded the minds of them that believe not." This is the action of the "god of this world," and he does it by means of man's evil lusts, etc. The gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ," (not the "glorious gospel of Christ," but) the revelation of *His glory*, who had been on the cross bearing sins, but is now glorified at God's right hand. The glory of God shines in His face, and there is no veil on this. All about God has come out: He no longer hides Himself as formerly He did; dwelling in "the thick darkness." So that if God is not seen and known, the veil is on man's heart, not on God's face. The blinding of Satan is not exactly *because* of the rejection of the gospel, but rather in leading man *to* reject it. The point is, that there is no veil now, except on the human heart, and it is in contrast with Moses, who put a veil over his face. When he came out to the people from the presence of God he put it on, because they could not bear the "glory of his countenance;" not even that little reflection of the glory of God which shone in his face. Man "came short of the

glory of God ;" and when only its reflection was brought before him, he could not endure it connected as it was with the law, or God's claim on him. But now the glory shines "in the face of Jesus Christ," and there is no veil upon it. Moreover there is not, nor do we need, a veil upon our face, but are like Moses, in Exodus xxxiv. 34, who had no veil on when he went in before the Lord. He turned to the Lord, and took the veil away. When Israel's heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away from them. (2 Cor. iii. 16.) But we do not wait for that day, but even now, "with open (or unveiled) face behold the glory of the Lord." And not only are we free to do this, but we love to do it, for it shines in the face of Him who died for us, and put away all our sins! Every ray of it tells how completely the work was done, for, though He was once on the cross, and our sins "were laid on Him," He is now in the glory, and certainly has not got our sins there. In Moses the glory connected itself with the law, requirement from man, and therefore man could not bear it; but in the gospel it shines in the face of Him who died for us. Christ has been "made sin" for us. He is now in the glory; and we, beholding with affection and intelligence the glory in Him, and taking delight in it, are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory." We see this in Stephen, when being stoned. He was steadfastly looking up into heaven, and saw "the glory of

God, and Jesus standing." Christ filled his vision, and see how like he is to his Lord. He is not thinking of the stones, but calmly prays the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, as Jesus committed His spirit to His Father, and prays for his murderers, as Jesus did.

Israel "could not look to the end of that which is abolished." (Chap. iii. 13.) They could not understand even the glory which was in the ordinances, as a figure of that which was better and permanent. The whole system ordained by the hand of Moses was veiled to their eyes, and the people fell under the letter that "killeth," even in that part which was a testimony of things to be spoken afterwards. Occupied with "the letter" of the covenant under which they were, they did not see that all the types and shadows—the legal ordinances—pointed to One yet to come. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. (Ver. 6.) "Now the Lord is that spirit" (not Spirit, ver. 17), and this they did not apprehend. The institutions under the law looked on to Christ, though even in the *grace* part of them there was the veil, a standing witness that God had not revealed *Himself*, and there was no way for *man* to approach His immediate presence. Under the law God did not come out, and man could not go in. The law came out, and the prophets came out; but God Himself was hidden behind the veil. In Christ, of course, God *had* come out, as He says in John xii. 46, "I am come a light into the



world." There God had come out, but man could not yet go in. Faith could say, "We beheld His glory," but redemption must be accomplished in order to enable man to go in before God. This having now been done, we see a *Man* in the glory, "crowned with glory," and God's glory in His face. Now all is out: God is fully revealed, and man enters the glory. The veil is rent "from the top to the bottom." God has come out; and man is gone, and can go, in.

Chapter iv. 2. Paul gave *out* the things of the gospel as pure as he received them *in*. He did not corrupt the doctrine, but manifested it in all the purity and brightness in which he had received it. Not only was the glory of God fully revealed with open face in Christ, but it was also manifested without a veil in the pure preaching of the apostle. This ministry, which was the power of the Spirit of God acting in the chosen instrument, made man responsible for submission to this glorious Christ; and when Christ was thus proclaimed, there was either submission of heart, or the blinding of Satan. *We* cannot take this ground as to the *power* of our preaching—as to the *subject* of it, we ought to be able to do so. I may preach the gospel in a place without effect, and another may come and present it with greater power, and the people be saved. Still I might, in a general way, say, If you do not receive the gospel I preach, you will be lost for ever.

In 1. Corinthians ii. we see (ver. 12) the apostle

received these things *in* by the Spirit ; verse 13, he told them *out* by the Spirit, so that we get them as pure as he received them, both being by the Spirit. "*Comparing* spiritual things" is not the thought : it should be "*communicating* spiritual things by spiritual means." And then (ver. 14) it is also by means of the Spirit that the things are received by those to whom they are addressed.

God has shined *into* our hearts, in order to the "shining out" of the knowledge of His glory. This is the meaning of "give the light," in verse 6 of the chapter before us (2 Cor. iv.) It is something like lighting a candle *in* a lantern, that the light of it may shine *out* through the glass ; and what Paul could say was, that the light shone out as clear and pure as God had caused it to shine in. The treasure was in an earthen vessel, and the only way for the light of the lamp to be seen, was by the pitcher being broken, and Paul did not mind the vessel being knocked about, and hardly pressed, so that the light shone out all the more. In chapter i. 8, he had been "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life," but what of that ? He had the sentence of death already in himself. It was realised already in his mind, and its coming outwardly only gave the consciousness of it greater vividness. He could fully say, as in this chapter, "Death worketh in us." Hence Paul as a mere man had ceased to exist in his service. *He was a vessel.* For the Corinthians it was only the power

of life in Christ which worked in him. Their gain was in all his trouble, as he says, "but life in you."

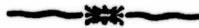
"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." (Ver. 10). This is practically reckoning myself dead continually in order that the body may be simply a vessel through which the life of Jesus manifests itself. *If the body is anything but a vessel, it is sin.* When I walk as one dead with Christ, the flesh is not allowed a place. A person may even *cultivate* the flesh, making a provision for it (Rom. xiii. 14). but that is bad indeed! He is a bad gardener that cultivates the weeds!

He says (ver. 11), "always delivered unto death." (See also chap. i. 8-10). Here the circumstances Paul was in helped him the more completely to realise himself as dead with Christ. God makes Paul realise these things by the very circumstances he has to pass through, in order that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal body. Thus death wrought in the apostle: what was merely of man and natural life disappeared, in order that life in Christ, developing itself in him on the part of God, and by the power of God, should work in the Corinthians by his means. *The flesh must be kept down, and not allowed to move or act,* and when one is in earnest the Lord passes him through circumstances which help him in it. Paul learns in an honourable way, for if the circumstances were trying, they came upon him for Christ's sake. With us the Lord has often to send discipline, because we have been *allowing* the flesh.

"All things are for your sakes." (Ver. 15). What a wonderful thing for Paul to say! How

much like his Master here, as also in what he says in 2 Timothy ii. 10, and other places.

*Christ in glory is my righteousness* : Paul had no better, and no one had any other ; and it is Him I am following after, to be with Him, and like Him. My life ought to be like a man in a long passage, going towards a bright lamp at the other end of it. I do not get the lamp till the *end*, but I have the light of it all the way, and the nearer I get to it, the more brightly it shines upon me, and in that sense I get more of the lamp every step I take. The nearer I get in my spirit to the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," the more I can afford to regard the trouble on every side as "light affliction," and "but for a moment." *All present things become less to me, the more really I am looking at eternal things.* Positive persecution I find to be less hard to bear when it actually comes, than it seems in looking forward to it. When it is before me I look *at it*—when I am in it, I look *out of it* at Christ, and find relief in God. And thus we do not faint.



FRAGMENT.—If by the law God tested fallen man as to ability and willingness *to do* His will ; by the Gospel, He has tested him as to his ability and willingness *to suffer* His will. Under the law, man was *to give* to God ; under the Gospel, man was *to receive from* God. But man, fallen, has neither heart, nor mind, nor will to have anything to do with God. He will not have Him as *the end* of his being, nor will he have Him as *its source*. When Grace prevails to save a soul, it soon becomes evident that *the source* precedes *the end*, and that "All my springs are in Thee" must precede "Lo, I come to do Thy will, oh God!"