

CHRIST ON THE THRONE OF GOD.

HEBREWS i. 3 ; viii. 1, 2 ; x. 12 ; xii. 2.

There is no point perhaps which the Spirit of God takes more pains to press in writing to the Hebrew Christians than the connection of the throne of God with the Lord Jesus. And the immense weight of such a relationship must be evident on the least reflection to one who knows what God is and what man is. There are two things that the Jew as a Jew never acknowledges. It was their great difficulty when unbelief began to overspread the nation, and it is the great lie of Judaism up to the present day.

The one is that God came down to man—God really and truly came down to man and not that He merely made a revelation of Himself. This they could easily believe. All their old polity was founded upon a manifestation of the divine presence ; but a real personal presence of God upon earth, to have God becoming a man, truly a man, is foreign to Judaism as such. The system of its Rabbis cannot abide it, utterly refuses it, and perishes in its war against it.

But there is another grand truth also to which Judaism is equally opposed : not that God came down merely, but that man was to go up and be with God. Judaism as such finds all its place upon the earth. It is essentially for the world ; and

even in its best shape it is earthly, not heavenly. According to God's intentions about it and the glorious counsels that He has yet in store for Israel, it is the blessing of Israel upon the earth, though I do not deny that after all the dealings with the earth are over, they, as all other believers, will have their portion according to a changed condition in the new heavens and earth. But still, speaking of the course of dispensations on the earth, Judaism finds its place not in the heavens, but here below. Therefore there was an immense barrier in their minds against the thought of a man being in heaven. Accordingly, in writing to the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost sets Himself to give the strongest possible expression to these truths, and that, too, founded on the ancient divine records which the Jews possessed. Psalm cx. has a very important connection with the whole doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as it was used on a most critical occasion by our Lord with the Jews in Matthew xxii.

The Lord Jesus is viewed in various lights as seated on the throne of God. In chapter i, it is connected with the glory of His person. The Messiah was divine. It was not merely that He was raised there, that God exalted Him above His fellows, though this was true ; but He was God. He who was a man was God ; He who was God deigned to become man. And now that He is

gone up to heaven, He is not gone up as God only, but as man. In Him, therefore, God had come down and man had gone up. He had not ceased to be God ; He could not cease to be what He is, but He had carried humanity on high, now bound up with His own person for ever, humanity itself in His person being on the throne of God. It is this, too, which is shown here to be bound up with the work that He has done. For it is evident that the value of the work in the sight of God depends on the glory of the person that did it. It is so even among men. The man who supposes that an action depends merely on itself, and not also on the person who does it, knows nothing as he ought to know. The same words from persons of a totally different character, and of different measures of dignity, would have and ought to have altogether another effect. Now this shows what an immense source of strength and blessing, for the Christian, is the holding fast the eternal glory of the person of Jesus. So it is said here, He is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His substance.

Observe by the way, it is not the express image of His "person," because each person was Himself ; the Father was Himself, the Son Himself, and the Holy Ghost Himself. Christ is never said to be the express image of the person of Father ; He is the image of the invisible God. The word is "substance" or "subsistence."

"And upholding all things by the word of His

power, when He had by Himself purged our sins." Creature could not mix in it: that divine and glorious Person undertook the whole work alone, and He would not take His seat otherwise than as having perfectly accomplished it. He would only sit down there "when He had by Himself purged our sins." Then and not before—not until purification of sins had been perfectly made—did He sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus our sins are gone according to the perfectness of the place of glory in which He is now seated. The Lord Jesus has not merely taken His seat on the throne of God as a divine person. He was and is evermore a divine person; and had He not been so, He could not have taken His seat there as He did; but He is glorified on that throne because He had, and when He had, by Himself purged our sins. What a perfect witness to the absolute putting away of sins for the believer! Thus it is that God graciously, but with perfect wisdom, binds together our faith in His personal glory, our perception of His present place as man, and the joy of the perfect abolition of our sins before God. You cannot separate them. If one of these truths is shut out, there is weakness about all the rest. If one lets go the glory of Christ, how can he henceforth realize the efficacy of His redemption in the remission of sins? If you hold fast His personal glory, you are entitled to know forgiveness according to the glory of His seat on the throne. If He was glori-

fied on that throne after He had taken your sins on Himself, it must have been because they were all absolutely borne away.

But the throne is used in quite another way in chapter viii. We were once enslaved by sin and we have still to deal with it, though entitled by Christ's death and resurrection to count ourselves dead to it. For believing in the Lord Jesus, and in the forgiveness of our sins by Him, we are in living relationship with God, our sins blotted out and our sin judged in the cross. Consequently sin is regarded as foreign to us, because in the nature in which we are in relationship with God, there is no sin, and the other nature is a constant encumbrance which we learn to look upon with hatred. But as we have the old nature still as a matter of fact, though delivered from it by faith, so we are liable to Satan's using the world to act on our flesh. Consequently we need a priest, and we have a Priest—the best Priest that God can give, the only Priest that ought to be confided in. “We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” There we find the glory of our Priest; the very same glory is bound up with His priesthood as with His atonement and His person. And we find that as a priest He could not be on a less place than the throne of God. God has seated Him there. Such is the witness to the glory of Him

who intercedes for us and is engaged to bring us through the wilderness.

But in chapter x. we have the combination of the sacrifice with the priesthood. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." It was not a temporary seat, because the sacrifice was absolute in its consequences, and in virtue of this He takes His seat permanently, or in continuity, on the right hand of God, to prove that there was nothing else that needed to be done as far as the blotting out of our sins was concerned. No doubt He will descend from heaven to receive His bride to Himself, as also to judge the world. But as to the question of purging our sins, He will never rise from that throne. His being there is the pledge of sin being put away. As I look up at the throne and know that the Son of God is seated there, I ought not to have any question about my sins being gone. There are those who think that this would diminish our present abhorrence of sin; but it is an objection of unbelief, not of holiness. It may have an appearance of jealousy for what is good; but it really flows from ignorance of God, and unbelief of the power of the sacrifice of Christ. For the believer—the ground of hatred of sin and of guarding against it lies not merely in our having a nature to which sin is an aversion, but in the certainty that the victory is won before we start on our course as

Christians. Therefore our business is to walk consistently with the truth that our sins are gone. If we trifle with sin after that, we lose sight of the deliverance which Christ has wrought for us; we are shewing human nature far from God, and so far walking in unbelief of the blessed place into which Christ has brought us by His blood.

But there is a fourth place in which the throne is introduced. In chapter xii. 2, Jesus is set down at the right hand of the throne as the witness that God is against the world and for Him whom the world cast out, the Captain of faith; not merely the sacrifice or the Priest, but the perfect pattern of faith as a man here below. Now as such He was a sufferer. The more faith, the greater the suffering. The Lord Jesus was not only the object of faith for others, but He deigned to become a man (and a man of faith) Himself; and, as a man, He had all the suffering as well as the joy of faith, as it is said here, "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It was not what He was going to receive, but His own grace that brought the Lord here. He had all things and needed nothing that could be given Him. Nor is it even true of the Christian that reward is the motive before him. The Christian does not start upon his career on earth because of the glory he is going to have in heaven. It is always the effect of divine

grace made known to the heart, and this alone, which separates from the world and delivers a man from himself. It is the absolute work of redemption. He knows he is starting with God's favour, and he has the encouragement of the glory at the end of the course. It was the fulness of love that brought the Lord down. But when here in the midst of sinners and of rejection and failure all around, this was what sustained Him in His errand of love; "for the joy that was set before Him (He) endured the cross, despising the shame." And here we have the answer to it on God's part: He "is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," and this just when everything appeared to be ruined; for the very last thing the world saw of Jesus was His cross. Apparently, as far as man could discern, a total victory was gained over the Son of God. God's purposes appeared to collapse in the cross of Jesus. He was the only righteous man, the only righteous judge, the appointed governor of the world; yet He had not the throne, but the cross. He was the Messiah of Israel, yet the despised and rejected of men. He was the object of faith to the disciples, yet they all forsook Him and fled. All appeared to be one mass of ruin and failure. But faith looks not to the earth, nor to man, but to God; and it sees that the Man who was rejected and crucified by the world is set down on the throne of the glory of God. And when the moment comes for God to display Him in glory, how He will reverse every thought of

man, and prove that faith alone was always right !
 And faith is only right because it is the answer in
 man's heart to the revelation of God.

The Lord grant that, rejoicing in such a Saviour
 and in such a portion as we shall have now in
 hope if not in present possession, and actually
 glorified with Him by and by, we may look
 through all present shame and sorrow with joy to
 that throne whence He will come to receive us to
 Himself in the Father's house.

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THE MEETING.

ROM. VIII. 35.

To Thee, Lord, my heart unfoldeth,
 As the rose to the golden sun—
 To Thee, Lord, mine arms are clinging,
 The eternal joy begun.
 For ever, through endless ages,
 Thy cross and Thy sorrow shall be
 The glory, the song, and the sweetness
 That makes heaven heaven to me.

Let one in his innocence glory,
 Another in works he has done—
 Thy Blood is my claim and my title,
 Beside it, O Lord, I have none.
 The Scorned, The Despised, The Rejected,
 Thou hast won Thee this heart of mine ;
 In Thy robes of eternal glory
 Thou welcomest me to Thine.

JOTTINGS ON JUDE.

There is something about the Epistle of Jude which attracts me increasingly the more I read it, and it seems to have a special application to the present day. Short though it be, what remarkable contrasts are presented to us and what vivid pictures come before us! Although the most solemn judgments are spoken of as impending, nowhere in Scripture are the love of God the Father and the untiring watchful care of the Lord Jesus more sweetly referred to.

Before taking up the epistle itself, it might be profitable to look at the antecedents of the penman employed by the Holy Spirit to indite it. If we turn to Luke vi., we find the Lord selecting the twelve apostles, and we know He was in the habit of sending them out two and two. In vs. 14-16, we get the names with an "and" between 1st and 2nd, and again between 3rd and 4th, and so on. May we not gather therefrom that we get the pairs that were usually together. It would seem then from ver. 16, that Jude (the writer of this epistle) was thrown very much into the company of Judas Iscariot. How much he must have seen, that was painful to him, in the one who afterwards came out fully in his true colours! Who so fitting to write about apostasy (as Jude does) as the one who was so much in the company of the great apostate? One cannot but feel in reading it that

he has Judas Iscariot constantly before him : attention may be called to vs. 4 and 12 as especially, though not exclusively, illustrating what I allude to. And, dear fellow believer, is there no practical lesson in this for you and me? Does the Lord not sometimes permit us to be thrown into company far from congenial, or allow us to pass through circumstances that are, in themselves, very trying? May He not be just preparing us for some little service which He has for us to do? May we (by His grace) be found so—

“In heavenly love abiding,”

that we may be able truthfully to say,

“His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,—
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.”

In turning to the epistle itself, I must call attention to an important, but well authenticated, alteration in the 1st verse, viz., “sanctified” should be “beloved.” It should read, “Jude, . . . to them that are called, beloved by God the Father and preserved by Jesus Christ,” etc. Strongly, too, is the change corroborated by internal evidence : for, while the evil referred to is of a terrible character and the coming judgment announced most solemn, the Holy Spirit presses repeatedly the fact that those who are the Lord’s are “beloved”—see vs. 3, 17, 20. Then in ver. 21, let appearances be

what they may, the saints are enjoined to "keep themselves in the love of God." For what can we not bear or go through if the sense of that love is in power in the heart. On the other hand, let the heart lose the sense of it for a moment, and what advantage does the enemy at once obtain! How precious to know that we are "preserved by Jesus Christ" likewise. The word not only signifies "preserved" (translated "keep" in ver. 21), but carries with it the thought of diligent watchfulness—surely sweetly suitable in connection with the care of Him who, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end."

After the appropriate salutation of "mercy unto you and peace be multiplied," he lets us know that the path before us is not a quiet, smooth one, but that we must "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," and that the enemy we have to fight against is not only an outside one, but also, through lack of watchfulness on the part of those holding the fort, certain who had got inside surreptitiously. In Israel of old, the most persistent and implacable foes were those inside the borders of Israel, the Philistines. Well, having got in unnoticed, they gradually undermine the truth. The danger may be scarcely noticeable at first—they are like "sunken" or "hidden rocks (rather than "spots") in the feasts of love." However, sooner or later, they come out in their true character. They may talk about love and the

grace of God; but really ignorant of it in their souls they turn it into lasciviousness, going on till the very rights of Christ are denied. Have we not this in a marked way in our day? The open infidel there is—but he is not the most dangerous enemy. What is it that makes the conduct of Judas Iscariot especially repugnant? Not only did he betray the blessed Lord, but actually used that which is the expression of affection in doing so. Have we not the same, in principle, reproduced in the present day? Take the one who is pleased to style himself a higher (?) critic. Does he not act towards *the written word* in a similar way that the traitor did to *The Word made flesh*? Judas pretended affection for Christ at the very moment he was betraying that blessed One into the hands of His enemies. The “higher critic” pretends to be the friend of the Bible at the very moment that he is betraying it into the hands of its enemies. Is not such an one far more dangerous than an open infidel? Ah, fellow-believer, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. i. 7), and may we be found good soldiers of Jesus Christ, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints! The enemy has ever attacked the word of God, sometimes openly, sometimes insidiously. An incident, I once heard of, comes to my mind, which may be profitable to relate. There was a certain congregation that had a new minister appointed who was one of these

men who pretend to "higher" ability. In his ministry he was constantly telling his hearers that such a part was not to be believed as it was, and that such another was not the word of God, etc. There was a dear godly old man in the congregation who was much grieved at all this, but who said nothing for a time. After some months he invited the minister to tea. The invitation was accepted. After tea the old man asked the minister if he would read the word of God, and he consented. The old man handed him what appeared to be a Bible. What was the minister's surprise to find very little besides the cover. It appears that the old man on going home after hearing the minister say that such a portion wasn't the word of God, etc., had cut out the part referred to, till the most of it was gone. When, therefore, the minister opened what had been given him and found little else than the binding, he exclaimed indignantly, "What do you give me this for? Are you making a fool of me?" "O," replied the old man, "this is all you have left us." The lesson was so practical and so striking, that it was used of the Lord to exercise the minister's conscience as to the folly of what he was doing, and was blessed to him.

How solemn is the summing up in ver. 11 of the three forms of evil. 1st. "The way of Cain." Natural evil. The opposition of the flesh to God's testimony and to those that are really His. Ignoring man's state before God since sin has come in,

and coming to God on the ground of what he could himself do, instead of owning (as Abel did) the ruined condition he was in and that he could only approach God on the ground of blood-shedding, the death of the Lamb.

2nd. Ecclesiastical evil: not only teaching error, but reducing it to a mere money basis.

3rd. Open opposition and rebellion against the authority of God as displayed in His true King and Priest.

The reference to Enoch is both solemn and blessed.

Solemn as indicating the terribleness of the evil and the grave judgment that followed.

Blessed as showing that, terrible though the evil was, God's grace was sufficient to enable a man of like passions as we are (in whom faith was) to walk with God and have the present sense of His favour. Likewise leading the heart on to the coming of the Lord Himself.

We are called upon to be builders as well as fighters (ver. 20), reminding us of those with Nehemiah in his day—see Neh. iv. 17, 18. The importance of prayer is also pressed upon us here, as in so many other places in Scripture.

What is spoken of in ver. 21 has already been alluded to. May the Lord graciously enable us to be diligent as to what is enjoined.

How important to remember what vs. 22, 23 teach. It recalls the instructions given Jeremiah,

“to separate the precious from the vile” (chap. xv. 19, 20).

How preciously does ver. 24 lead us back to what we had at the commencement, viz., that we are “preserved by Jesus Christ ;” for it speaks of Him as the One who is able to keep us from (not only “falling,” but, as it should be, from even) stumbling, and to present us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” Whose joy? In all things He hath the pre-eminence. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. viii. 10).

Surely, beloved, we can heartily join—as another year closes—in the ascription,

TO
THE
ONLY WISE
GOD OUR SAVIOUR
BE GLORY AND MAJESTY,
DOMINION AND POWER,
BOTH NOW AND
EVER.
AMEN.

ERRATUM.—Page 201, line 2, for “Ezekiel xlvii. 1-10, 11,” read “Ezekiel xlvii. 1-10, 12.”