

**“DOTH NOT EVEN NATURE ITSELF TEACH
YOU?”**

Nature to the mind attentive,
Teaches oft a hidden truth,
Even by a tiny insect,
Speaking to our heart's reproof.

Many a different plant will furnish
Daily food the insect needs,
But it always takes the colour
From the leaf whereon it feeds.

Christians, from the bread of heaven,
Oft-times turn to earthly fare,
But a tell-tale change of colour,
To their shame, they always wear.

If on Christ, the Lamb, we're feeding,
We'll present a heavenly blue,
But the taste of earthly follies,
Changeth to another hue.

CHRIST AS OUR FOOD.

JOSHUA V.

I would say a word as to the way in which Christ may be considered as our food. He may be looked at as the food of the Christian in three ways.—First, as a redeemed sinner; secondly, in connection with sitting in heavenly places in Christ; and thirdly, as a pilgrim and stranger down here. But this last is merely accessory, and not the proper portion of the Christian. The Lord said to Israel that He had come down to deliver them from

Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan (Ex. iii. 8). He did not say a word about the wilderness when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there, was in the power of redemption, and for the accomplishment of His promises. However, there was the wilderness, as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently—that is, redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna, which we have all along the road. It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people, and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have seen, but the third ceases when the circumstances it was to meet have passed away. They did eat the passover and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover—for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased and Egypt had been long left behind. When in Egypt the blood was on the lintel and the door-posts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the door-posts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do, for if

brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found ! (Ps. cxliii. 2).

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits. When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan—not only the Red Sea. That is, we have passed through death and resurrection, not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea ; but as being dead with Him and entered into heavenly places in Him, as in Jordan. Then the character of God is known as *their God*, that is, the accomplisher of all that which He purposed toward them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love ; not looking at God as in the cross, pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus on the cross there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us ! And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe ; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt.

In this type we see presented, not the sinner

that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections ; his heart confidently flowing out to Him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified Man, not only as Son of God, but as Son of man ; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld *Jesus* at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as He is represented in the Revelation, seated on a white horse, coming forth out of heaven. He will indeed come forth and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him and be for ever with Him. But we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now. Manna is not our portion, though it is our provision by the way.

Joshua sees Jehovah as the Captain of Jehovah's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, because it is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens, it is Christ down here. It is not our portion, our portion is the old corn of the land ; that is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin (excepting that God does give us moments of joy), because, while here, there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or

gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes and feeds us with manna — that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shews how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life; and that is a happy thing. For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things, necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not occupied with heavenly joy in Christ. And these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord and hinder our joy. But if we would have our appetites feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna.

For instance, something may tend to make me impatient during the day; well then, Christ is my patience, and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this, for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily; for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ, and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege, but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace and turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

THE RED HEIFER.

In Numbers xix. we learn the excessive jealousy of the Lord about sin, not in the sense of guilt, but defilement. This He measures by His sanctuary. We have to do with it, and nothing unclean can be allowed. We are "clean every whit" (John xiii. 10), but the feet-washing is needed. We belong to the sanctuary, and yet are in the world, though not of it (John xv. 19; xvii. 14); we need to have a just estimate of both. If we but touch evil, a remedy is required. Still it is not the question of justification, but of communion. Sin hinders that—hinders my coming boldly into the holiest. How was this met? The blood of the unblemished heifer, representing Christ who knew no sin and could not be brought under its power, was sprinkled before the tabernacle seven times—that is, before the place of communion, not of atonement. The sin-offering was burnt without the camp; but the blood of the red heifer was sprinkled seven times where we meet God in intercourse. This marks the full efficacy of Christ's blood when I meet God. The body was reduced to ashes, as Christ was judged and condemned for what I am apt to be careless about; but God is not careless, and would make me sensible of sin. Christ had to suffer for it, and it is gone; but the sight of His suffering shews me the dreadfulness of it.

God has an eye that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart; He would have us discern

them too, and without this there can be no communion. But we do not get back into communion as quickly as we get out of it. Seven days elapsed in the type before there was full restoration. The Spirit takes and applies the ashes (that is, the remembrance of Christ's agony, and what occasioned it), and makes us feel practical horror of sin.

When I look at my sin with horror, even in the sense of the grace which has met it, it is a right feeling, but not communion: it is a holy judgment of sin in the presence of grace. Hence, there was a second sprinkling—not on the third day, but the seventh, and then there is communion with God. We see that perfect grace alone maintains the sense of perfect holiness. The result, in the end, is that we increase in the knowledge of God, both as to holiness and love. We must have been out of communion before we sinned, or we should not have yielded. How came I to fall? Because of the carelessness which left me out of God's presence, and exposed me to the evil without and within.

BABYLON.

(REVELATION XVII., XVIII.)

“Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” This is a saying much to be remembered. It teaches us that we are not to make ourselves the judges of what sanctification or holiness is; God's word is to determine this; because holiness

is that character or mind which is formed by God's word or truth.

We are apt to think that our own moral sense of things is the rule of holiness. But the word of God claims to be such a rule: "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth." (John xvii.)*

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense, or the religious sense, of man approves, how it would change its character! And the Lord cannot change His standard of holiness, though He may be infinitely gracious to the shortcomings of His saints.

These other words, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth," which stand in connection, have their own force and value also. Thus, in the whole of His utterance in John xvii., the Lord strongly takes a place apart from the world, and puts His saints in the like place, praying that they may be kept there. In this sense, I believe, He speaks of sanctifying Himself. Through all this church-age He is apart from the world and the earth, and sanctification depends on our communion with Him in that separated place. "The truth," testifying as it does of Him, links us with Him in that place; and sanctification is thus "through the truth," leading us to fellowship with an unworldly Jesus.

* An act may be unholy, though done with a good conscience, because "the truth," and not the conscience, is the rule of holiness.

We may see instances of such sanctification from the beginning. When the ground was cursed for man's sake, holiness was separation from it, as in the persons of the antediluvian saints ; uncleanness was cleaving to it, as did the family of Cain.

When the earth again corrupted itself and God judged it by the scattering of the nations, holiness was separation from it, as in Abraham ; and apostasy was a clinging to it in spite of judgment, as Nimrod did.

When Canaan was judged, Achan's sin savoured of the apostate mind ; but Israel became a holy people by separation from it and from all people of the earth, by the ordinances of God and the sword of Joshua.

But Israel revolts. The circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and with them all on the face of the earth or in the world becomes defiled, and holiness is separation from it in companionship with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

The whole system, the world, is the judged or cursed thing now. It is the Jericho. While the camp lingers in the wilderness, we may be at charges or in labours on a mission to draw out the Rahabs ; but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and capabilities of the world.* Such doings would be unho'y, not

* The word, as including other thoughts, is also any moral or religious system or undertaking which does not act in company with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

according "to the truth," however morally conducted, or benevolently intentioned.

Glorying in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the perfect thing of this age ; there must be companionship with a rejected Christ also. Babylon, I believe, the mystic Babylon of the Revelation, may be brought to boast in a crucified Christ, and be Babylon still. For what is it as delineated by the Spirit ? Is it not a thing worldly in character as well as abominable and idolatrous in doctrine and practice ? Revelation xviii. gives us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness, as chapter xvii. more in its idolatries. Babylon of old, as in the land of Chaldea, was full of idols, and guilty of the blood or of the sorrows of the righteous. But it had also this mark : it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression. So with the mystic Babylon. She has her abominations in the midst of her, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus stains her ; but still more fully is she disclosed as great and splendid, and joyous in the earth during the age of Christ's rejection. She is important in the world in that day when the judgment of God is preparing for the world ; she can glorify herself and live deliciously in a defiled place.

It is not that she is ignorant of the cross of Christ. She is not heathen. She may publish Christ crucified, but she refuses to know Christ rejected. She does not continue with Him in His temptations, nor consider the poor and needy Jesus (Luke xxii. ; Psalm xli.) The kings of the

earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth are her subjects.

Is not, then, the rejection of Christ the thing she practically scorns? Surely it is. And again I say, the prevailing thought of the Spirit about her is this: she is that which is exalted in the world while God's Witness is depressed and in defiance of that depression, for she knows it. Babylon of old well knew of the desolations of Jerusalem; Christendom now well knows and publishes the cross of Jesus.

Babylon of old was very bold in her defiance of the grief of Zion. She made the captives of Zion to contribute to her greatness and her enjoyments. Nebuchadnezzar had done this with the captive youths, and Belshazzar with the captives' vessels.

This was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom. Christendom is the thing which glorifies herself and lives deliciously in the earth, trading in all that is desirable and costly in the world's esteem in the very face of the sorrow and rejection of that which is God's. Christendom practically forgets Christ rejected on the earth.

The Medo-Persian is another creature. He removes Babylon, but he exalts himself (Daniel vi.). And this is the action of "the Beast" and his ten kings. The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings; but then they give their power to the Beast who exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, as Darius the Mede did.

This is the closing, crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet. Our conflict is with Babylon and not with the Mede, with that which lives deliciously and in honour during the age of Jerusalem's ruins (i. e., of the rejection of Christ).

WATCHING.

The characteristic of a person who has his ear open to the Lord is watching. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii. 37). I find Him serving, then, in divine love, still in the same character. He comes and brings us to heaven—to His Father's house, that where He is, there we may be also. "While you were in that wicked world," He says, "I was obliged to keep you on the watch, in a state of tension, with diligent earnestness to keep the heart waiting; but I bring you to a place where you are to sit down, and it will be my delight to minister to you."

It is one of the greatest comforts to me that I shall not want my conscience in heaven. If I let it go to sleep for a moment now, there are temptations and snares; there, there is no evil, and the more my heart goes out, the more good it is. Here I dare not let it, but I must watch and pray; I shall not need that in heaven. The full blessed-

ness of it is, the Lord being there of course ; and next, the saints being perfect. What does the heart desire that cares for the Lord's people ? That they should be just what Christ's heart would have them. That will be so there ; He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Then there is after that this comfort, that my heart can go out—here it cannot—to God and the Lamb, and to the saints in measure too ; but then, roam as it will, there is nothing to roam over but a paradise where evil never comes, and it can never go wrong.

He comes, then, and takes us there ; and what heaven can find there for the heart to feed on is spread on the table of God. " You shall rest there and feed on it," He says, " and I will gird myself, and come forth and serve you. I am not going to give up my service of love." Thus, while I have the blessedness of feeding on what God has to give, I have the increased satisfaction, that if I put a morsel of divine meat into my mouth, I receive it from the hand of love that brings it to me. When He brings us there, all is turned round. " Here," He says, " you must have your lights burning, and be watching ; when I get my way, I must put you at ease, and make you happy." " Then shall the Son also Himself be subject." He was serving here. It was man's perfection to serve—the very thing the devil tried to get Him out of. If He had, it would have been doing His own will ; but " though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." But when all

things shall have been subdued unto Him, He is subject after that. In the meanwhile He has been on His own throne; now He is on His Father's throne, our High Priest; but He will take His own throne and power, and reign, bringing everything into subjection. Then it is not serving, but reigning; afterwards He gives up the kingdom in that sense to His Father, for everything is brought to order. In the millennium it is a King reigning in righteousness; but then it is new heavens and earth, wherein *dwells* righteousness. Innocence dwelt in the first paradise; sin dwells in the present earth; and then, in the new heavens and earth, it will be "wherein dwelleth righteousness." He gives up the mediatorial kingdom, as it is called, to God, and takes His place as a man—"the First-born among many brethren." He never gives up a place in which He can own us as associated with Himself in the blessedness of First-born of many brethren. As all was ruined in the first Adam, all shall be blessed in the last. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Then I find myself enjoying everything that God can give to the objects of His love, and enjoying it with Christ then at the head of everything—Son of God and Son of man; we associated with all the blessedness, and He administering to us so that the heart can taste His love. And He does not just bring us there, but it is to all eternity. He has purchased us too dearly to give us up. His love will be in constant exer-

cise toward us. It leads us to adore Him more than anything that can be thought of; but we can trust a love that never ceases in heaven.

You see here His heart is going out to do it; therefore you must have lights burning. "Let your light" (not your works) "so shine before men," that they may know where your works come from, "and glorify your Father which is in heaven," that they may attribute them to God. I do whatever God tells me to do, and it is a testimony to Christ. People say that is what comes from a man being a Christian. It is that there may be no uncertainty as to what we are—a well trimmed lamp, the testimony of the life of Christ—that it may be manifested what I am, and what I am about—a pilgrim and a stranger in a thousand different circumstances, the ordinary duties of life to perform, but one service—to be the epistle of Christ. I may be a carpenter or a shoemaker; I must be a *Christian*. In various relationships, servants, masters, in eating or in drinking, in our houses, wherever it is, I must be a Christian.

What characterized those servants was *watching*, and they got the blessing. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." Ah, beloved friends, are you watching, waiting for Christ practically? I cannot be watching and going on in my own way. Are your lights burning, or have we slipped down to the ease and comforts of this world like other

people? That is not having our loins girded, and it is not as a *doctrine* we are to have it only.



The people of God should wait with the *girdle* and the *lamp*, which are the beautiful standing symbols of their calling, till the Lord appears—that is, with minds girt up unto holy separation from present things, and with hearts brightened up with the desire and expectation of coming things.



The adversary gets many an advantage over us through *slovenliness*. How little equal are we to the occasions that present themselves. Satan works more effectually now with the *pillow* than he formerly did with the stake.



"WATCH

YE THEREFORE : FOR YE KNOW NOT
 WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE COMETH,
 AT EVEN, OR AT MIDNIGHT, OR AT THE COCK-CROWING,
 OR IN THE MORNING :
 LEST COMING SUDDENLY HE FIND YOU SLEEPING,
 AND WHAT I SAY UNTO YOU I SAY UNTO ALL,
 WATCH."

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