

**THE APPEARANCE OF
CHRIST IN HUMAN NATURE,
AND THE DISCOVERIES OF HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE,
COMPARABLE TO THE
LIGHT OF THE MORNING**

2 SAMUEL 23:4

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

In a former discourse we considered the preceding verse, *He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God*. Now of this same Ruler, it is here said, *He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds*. "He shall be;" that is, He that ruleth over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

As the favor of an earthly prince is like a *cloud of latter rain*, and *dew upon the grass*, as the wise man says (Prov.16:15; 19:12): so his government, being mild and gentle, he is like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, pleasant and acceptable like the rising sun, bright and glorious; like a morning without clouds, that forebodes no ill, distress, affliction or adversity to his subjects, but all the reverse. This is still more true as it is applied to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Saints, the *King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom ruleth all*; the administration of whose government is just and righteous. He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He is, and shall be, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, as a morning without clouds.

There are various metaphors applied to Christ similar to this; as, when he is said to be the *bright and morning Star* (Rev. 22:16): the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the morning light. *The day spring from on high that hath visited us* (Luke 1:78); that brings on that bright and glorious day of the gospel dispensation. He is the day Star that arises in the hearts of his people; and that Sun of righteousness that arises upon them with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2). So that the expressions of his grace, and the nature of his government may be fitly signified by the beautiful metaphor and figure here made use of. And

- I. This may be applied unto him as coming into the world by the assumption of human nature.
- II. To the discoveries he makes of himself to his people, in and after conversion.

III. To his government as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God: especially with regard unto his rule and government as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign.

Note: *Roman Numerals II and III (see above) are part of Sermon V.*

I. This may have respect to his coming into the world; his appearance in human nature, where he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. It was foretold of him, that *his goings forth should be prepared as the morning* (Hosea 6:3): which is to be understood, not of his going forth of old, from everlasting, in the counsel and covenant of grace and peace; but his coming forth in time, his appearance in human nature, to work out the redemption and salvation of his people. The first hint of the Messiah, as a Saviour for lost sinful men, was as the dawn of morning light.

The sin of Adam brought a darkness upon him and the whole world. The first man was created with a great deal of light and knowledge. He was made after the image, and in the likeness of God, and which greatly consisted in knowledge, not merely of things natural, civil, and moral, but things divine. in the knowledge of God, his nature and divine perfections, will, and worship; of which Adam had a large share. But not content therewith, and being ambitious to know good and evil, he lost, in a great measure, the light and knowledge he had. Darkness overspread him; his understanding immediately became darkened; and so is the understanding of all men that descend from him by ordinary generation. *Their understandings are darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.* This darkness, this blindness, is universal: there are none free from it. God's elect, while in a state of nature, are so. Dark with respect to their knowledge of spiritual things: yea, they are darkness itself till they are made light in the Lord. This is the case of all men universally. Jews and Gentiles are all under the power of sin, and liable to the consequences of it, and the elect among the rest; for *there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeks after God.* The way of peace, righteousness, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, they know not: and in such circumstances as these Adam found himself. As soon as he had sinned against God, he was immediately deprived of his gracious presence: enjoyed no more communion and fellowship with him in the way he did before: an emblem of which was, his being driven out of the garden. *So he drove out the man* (Gen. 3:24); signifying that sin had separated between God and him. There was an eclipse, as it were, between God and him: in consequence of which, it was a night of black darkness. He found himself in a most wretched state and condition: a most uncomfortable frame of soul: in the greatest anguish and distress: trembling at the thoughts of coming before that God, against whom he had sinned; and therefore attempted to hide himself from his presence amongst the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). He knew not what would be the issue and consequence of things. He could see no way of escaping the wrath of God. He had no hint of a Savior. He was as much without the knowledge of one, or any hope of salvation by one, as the blindest heathen that ever lived upon the face of the earth. This was the case of the first man.

Now all at once, behold, an hint was given of the Messiah: a discovery of a Savior for lost, sinful man, in that threatening to Satan, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head* (Gen.3:15). This was the first dawn of morning light to lost sinful man: and there was, at this time, a ray of light darted into Adam's mind, which he never was sensible or knew any thing at all of, in a state of innocence, amidst all the light and knowledge he then had. It was indeed a glorious ray of light

which darted into his mind, upon this single hint of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. From hence, he might and did conclude, that he and Eve should not die, since there was a seed, a son to spring from them, and one that should bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of him who had been the ruin of them. O! how it must gladden his heart! what cheerfulness must be in his countenance, which it is not possible for us to describe.

And this, like the light of the morning, was of an *increasing* nature. As the morning light spreads upon the tops of the mountains as soon as it appears, and gradually diffuses itself throughout the horizon; so this light, this morning light, which sprung up in this first promise of grace, diffused itself greatly: partly by means of *sacrifices*, which God appointed to be offered up from that time, and partly by *prophecies*, which were delivered out at certain times, respecting the glorious person that should appear in our world as the Savior of lost men.

This light., this morning light of divine grace spread itself or was spread by means of *sacrifices*, which were immediately ordered to be offered up. Adam was soon taught the way and method of offering sacrifices as an atonement for sin; as typical of the sacrifice of the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head. By these means he was more and more enlightened into the way, and nature of the method of his salvation and redemption: and still more when the Lord God was pleased to make, of the skins of slain beasts, coats for him and Eve, and clothed them which were emblems of the robe of righteousness, and the garment of salvation, to be wrought out by the woman's seed, the Savior of men. And Adam taught his posterity the way and method of offering sacrifices; for we may observe that his son Abel, *by faith* in the promised Savior, by faith in his atoning sacrifice for sin, *offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain* (Heb. 11:4). Hence it is, with reference to these early sacrifices, and the institution and practice of them, that Christ is said to be the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev.13:8). By these, and succeeding sacrifices, under the Levitical dispensation, which were numerous, this morning light, respecting a Savior, salvation by him, and acceptance through his sacrifice, was spread more and more.

This morning light of divine grace, shining through a Mediator and Savior, was likewise spread more and more by means of *prophecy*. Various and numerous were the prophecies concerning Christ the woman's seed; for he was spoken of from this time forward, by the mouth of all God's holy prophets, from the beginning of the world: they all had respect to him. He was the sum and substance of their prophecies; for so the disciples and followers of our Lord said, *we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write* (John 1:45). Moses wrote of him, and all the prophets did so; the Spirit of Christ in them signified what he should be, and what he should do; testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Every prophecy relating to him, spread more and more light concerning him. The light that came therewith was like the morning light, a spreading and increasing one. By and through these prophecies it was known from whom he should particularly descend. The first hint is only that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been enough to have been born of any woman, to have completed that prophecy. But by degrees this was opened more and more; that he was to be born, not in a common or ordinary way, that he was to be born of a *virgin, and his name called Immanuel, God with us* (Matthew 1:23); and that he was to spring from Abraham the father of the faithful, *in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed* (Gen. 28:14). Another prophecy gives us farther light into this matter, and informs us, he was to spring from Judah; *from whom the sceptre was not to depart, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, our Lord Jesus Christ, should come*

(Gen. 49:10). Other prophecies inform us more particularly that he was to spring from David's family, and to be a branch or stem out of the root of Jesse: others give us an account where he should be born, and when he should appear in the world. One prophecy fixes the very place of his birth; *Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel* (Micah 5:2): and others point out the exact time of his coming; that he should come before the rule, sceptre or government was to depart from the Jews, before the second temple was destroyed—for that he should come into, and give it a greater glory. Daniel fixes the exact time from the going forth of such a commandment; that there should be so many weeks, that is, so many years till the coming of the Messiah.

The first promise of the Messiah, only gives a hint of the work he should do, which was to bruise the serpent's head: but other prophecies more clearly declare, that he was to do the whole will and work of God; obtain salvation for his people; finish transgression; make an end of sin; and bring in an everlasting righteousness. That he was to be a Prophet like unto Moses; and a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec—that he was to be King over God's holy hill of Sion, and the sceptre of his kingdom a righteousness. Other prophecies also shew what he was to do in obedience to the will of God; and what he was to suffer in the room and stead of his people. That he was to be brought to the dust, and numbered amongst the transgressors: that he was to die and be buried, and lay in the grave, though not so long as to see corruption: that he should rise again, ascend up on high, sit down at the right hand of God, and there reign till all enemies were put under his feet. These, with many others, brought on such light and knowledge concerning a Saviour and Redeemer, as plainly made it appear that this light, like the morning-light, was a growing, spreading, and increasing one.

This, like that also, was attended with *joy and cheerfulness*, as the morning light is. The first hint of a Messiah, a Savior and Redeemer of lost man, was attended with joy and cheerfulness to Adam, as we have seen already; so every fresh prophecy, and after revelation of the will of God, concerning this matter, gave joy and pleasure to those to whom the discovery was made; as it did unto Abraham, of whom it is said, that *Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad*. So every fresh discovery made by any of the prophets unto the church of God, in the several periods of time, were all attended with joy and cheerfulness. Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, speaking concerning Christ, says, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass* (Zech. 9:9). As the morning light is a *pledge* of the rising sun, a sure pledge of it, whenever we see day break, or the morning light appear, we are sure that the sun will rise, and that it will not be long ere it is risen; so that light which broke forth and spread gradually under the former dispensation, was an earnest and pledge of Christ the Sun of righteousness arising in due time, with healing in his wings. As yet, indeed, he was not risen; there was only the morning light spreading, but the Sun was not risen. There were still the shadows of the ceremonial law remaining. That law is by the apostle described, as a *shadow of good things to come, which had not the very image of the things* (Heb. 10:1). All those representations, under the legal dispensation, were shadowy ones. Christ is represented as the body and substance of them: the apostle, speaking of some of them in particular, adds, *which were a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ* (Col. 2:17). Those continued under the legal dispensation, notwithstanding the morning light had broke forth; *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether* (Sol. Song 2:17).

That law which is comparable to the moon, was indeed the lesser light, and the light which rules by night. This seems to be intended in Revelation 12:1, where the church is represented as having the moon under her feet; the moon of the ceremonial law: and it may very fitly be signified by the moon, since that consisted among other things, in the observance of new moons. Its festivals, and ordinances were regulated by the moon, and like that, were changeable; and because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, vanished away. There was in this season stars of light. As Gospel ministers are sometimes called (Rev. 1:20); so the prophets, teachers, and instructors under the Old Testament dispensation, may very properly be signified thereby, who held forth the word of God, which was a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths. But all this plainly intimated that the Sun was not risen: there was the moon of the ceremonial law, and stars which gave light; yet there was a comparative darkness under that dispensation, though the morning light did appear: a comparative darkness in the Jewish world and state. The children of Israel were not able to look to the end of that which was to be abolished. The way into the holiest of all was not so manifest as now, until the vail was rent asunder; and as to the Gentile world, that was full of darkness and ignorance. A time of ignorance that God winked at, took no notice of, but left them to walk in the vanity of their minds: and these are said to walk in darkness, and sit in the shadow of death.

When our Lord actually appeared in our flesh, came into the world, and appeared in our nature; then he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. He came in like the light of the morning, which dispelled darkness, and introduced light: dispelled darkness in the Jewish state, and scattered the shadows of the ceremonial law. Dispelled darkness from the Gentile world when his gospel came amongst them; for he came to be a light unto the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. So to remove and banish that night, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, *the night is far spent; the day is at hand* (Rom. 13:12).

By his coming into our world, the glorious light of the everlasting gospel was introduced. He came a *Light*. John his forerunner was not that light; but Christ was that light, and is called *the light of the world* (John 8:12); both of the Jewish and Gentile world. The light of the everlasting gospel which came by him, appeared very bright even unto all men; which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. This made that day, that glorious and illustrious day, which the prophets so much spoke of, *the gospel day*, concerning which, the apostle thus expresses himself, *now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation*.

The coming of our Lord was like the light of the morning, *sudden and swift*: according to what was foretold of him that he should *suddenly come into his temple* (Mal. 3:1); or unawares, as he did. There were some indeed who were waiting for the consolation of Israel; as good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetess: but there were but few of this kind. Christ came suddenly into the world and into his temple; at unawares to the greatest part of mankind. Like the light of the morning he came *swiftly*: he was, as the church desired he would be, *like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether* (Sol. Song 2:17). As soon as the time was up, which was fixed between him and his divine Father, God sent him; and he came readily. He was *made of a woman; made under the law* (Gal. 6:4). As the morning light is attended with *pleasure, joy and cheerfulness* to all kind of creatures; so the coming of our Lord was attended with *joy, spiritual joy*, to those who knew any thing of him, and that salvation which he came to effect. The Angels who brought the first news of it say, that they brought *good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people* (Luke 2:10): and the first

disciples and followers of our Lord, who had the first intimation of his being come, with what joy did they express themselves! In raptures, they said, *we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write*, Christ the anointed one, the Son of God. So, wherever the gospel came with power, there was joy attended it; witness Samaria. We are told, *there was joy in that City* (Acts 8:8). Thus it was wherever Christ was preached, or any notice was given of his being come, and of salvation being wrought out by him.

The light which came by him was, like the morning light, *spreading and increasing*. He and his disciples went over all the land of Judea; and the gospel was published throughout the several parts thereof. It indeed was at one time limited and confined thereunto. The disciples were ordered to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not go into the way of the Gentiles: but after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, they were commanded to go into all nations, teaching and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They did so; *their words went out through all the earth, and their sound unto the end of the world*. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after the death of Christ, the gospel was preached to all nations: *to every creature under heaven* (Col. 1:23), as the apostle expresses it. He himself was a great instrument in this affair; for he went about, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, preaching the gospel of Christ.

Once more; like the light of the morning he came *irresistibly*. As there is no such thing as preventing the light of the morning, when it once breaks forth, nothing in nature can possibly do it; so there was no preventing that gospel light which came by Christ. The word of the Lord had a free course; it ran and was glorified. Though there were all the methods taken to prevent its spread that could be devised among the Jews, they could not do it; the word of the Lord grew and multiplied. Nor could it be shut out from the Gentile world: though emperors, and governors of provinces and cities, were almost all, to a Man, against it, (those spiritual wickednesses in high places;) yet the apostles triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place; which was a means of reducing thousands of souls to the obedience of Christ.

The coming of Christ is said to be not only like the light of the morning, but like the light of the morning *when the sun riseth*. He is styled the *Sun of righteousness* (Mal. 4:2). He, whom John saw visionally, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth; for he himself is a glorious Sun. A luminous body, the sun: the greater light, made to rule by day. An emblem of Christ, who is the light of the world: from whom all light comes. The light of Nature; for he is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World (John 1:9). The light of grace in conversion, is from him; and all after light also. Men are darkness itself until they are made light in the Lord: and the light of glory, that perfect, happy state the saints shall be brought into, and enjoy for evermore, it is all from Him. That glorious city is represented as standing in no need of the light of the sun, or of the moon, because the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev.21:23). *The Sun is a glorious body*. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Cor. 15:41); but the glory of the sun is greatest: that is of superior glory. A fit emblem of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: in whom shines the glory of all the divine perfections. Any one that has a spiritual sight of things, can behold the *glory of Christ as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). He, having a spiritual sight, by means of the light of the everlasting gospel, does behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ's person, and the glory of his offices; and is changed into the same image

from glory to glory. As the sun is a *lucid body, clear, and to appearance free from spots*; so it is expressive of the spotless purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the Saints, being washed in his blood and through his righteousness imputed, are said to be, all fair and without spot; much more may He be said to be so: fairer than the sons of Adam. If They are said to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: much more is He so.

And if this light, which comes from the sun, in a natural sense, is what is most delightful to behold; much more must that light which comes from Christ, and shines from him. *Truly the light is sweet* (says the wise man) *and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun* (Eccl. 11:7); O! how much sweeter is spiritual light from Christ; and how much sweeter must it be to behold him, the Sun of righteousness, arising upon us with healing under his wings!

He coming, and grace and truth by him, caused a greater and stronger light under the gospel dispensation, than was under the legal one, when it was only as the dawn of the morning. Perhaps to this difference of states, respect may be had in Solomon's Song (7:10), where the church is said to be, *fair as the moon*; so she was under the legal dispensation: but it is added, *clear as the sun*; so she is under the gospel dispensation, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

From him, the Sun of righteousness, come the rays of light and love: and, as from the natural sun heat is derived, so likewise, from Christ the Sun of righteousness, heat as well as light proceeds. His coming inspired his people, his followers, with love to him, and zeal for him; and their hearts burned within them while he opened the Scriptures of truth unto them. From hence also springs all their spiritual fruitfulness. We read of *precious fruits brought forth by the sun* (Deut. 33:14); all the fruits of grace and righteousness are owing to Christ the Sun of righteousness.

Now when he appeared, he was as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even *a morning without clouds*; for all clouds disappeared when he arose; all the shadows of the ceremonial law: there was a disannulling of this commandment through the unprofitableness thereof. These shadows disappeared, when he the body and substance came.—*A morning without clouds*. There was not so much as a shadow of the ceremonial law, much less any of the storm or tempest of the moral law: that which is expressed by blackness and darkness and tempest, (Heb. 12:19); no, these were all over; the stormy dispensation is at an end; the rain is over and gone. No more the thunders of mount Sinai; all the curses of that law are fallen upon the surety and Savior; he has borne them; he has been made, himself, a curse for his people, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law. So that now, the gospel dispensation is a morning without clouds; no storm, no tempest, no indication of any. A morning without any clouds of divine wrath and displeasure; here is nothing but peace proclaimed upon earth and good will towards men. The love and kindness of God our Savior towards man appears. Peace is made by the blood of Jesus; reconciliation is made for iniquity; a Sacrifice offered up of a sweet smelling savor to God: a righteousness wrought out that is well pleasing to God; because by it the law is magnified and made honorable. The language of the gospel is, *fury is not in me* (Isa. 27:4); no, Christ appearing in our nature, doing the will and work of his God and ours, is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

I should now have proceeded to have shown you how it is applicable to his manifestation of himself to his people, in and after conversion; which is like the rising of the sun, dispels darkness and ignorance from their minds; and is of a spreading nature, like the light of the morning; and sometimes so clear that it is like the light of the morning when the sun is up; when there is a clear sky, and a serene heaven; a morning without clouds.

And how particularly it may be applied to Christ as a Ruler among men, and his rule and government of his spiritual kingdom, which ere long will be as the light of the morning when the sun is risen, a morning without clouds; and especially in his personal reign.—But I must leave these things, with what follows in this verse, to another opportunity as God shall give it.

**THE APPEARANCE OF
CHRIST IN HUMAN NATURE,
AND THE DISCOVERIES OF HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE,
COMPARABLE TO THE
LIGHT OF THE MORNING, AND TO THE TENDER
GRASS SPRINGING OUT OF THE EARTH, BY
CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN.**

2 SAMUEL 23:4

And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

These Words are in dose connection with the latter part of the third verse, and are spoken of the same person. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. That is, He that rules over men; a righteous ruler over men, ruling in the fear of the Lord, he shall be as the light of the morning. Whether this is to be understood of an earthly ruler, of a ruler in and among men, that rules and reigns in righteousness, governing his people according to the rules of equity and justice, according to the laws of God and his country; executing justice and judgment among his subjects, and ruling in the fear of God, having that before his eyes, and upon his heart; considering himself as God's vicegerent, as standing in his room and stead, acting in his name, and under his authority, and so accountable to him; or whether we understand this of a greater Ruler still, of Christ Jesus in the exercise of his Kingly office, who is King and Ruler of all men; of the greatest of men, of the worst of men, and of the best of men who is King of saints; the righteous branch raised up unto David; a King that reigns in righteousness, rules in the fear of God, has the grace of fear in him, as Mediator, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord upon him, and who rules the fear of God, (as it may be rendered:) that is, governs, orders and directs the whole worship of God, as he does under the gospel dispensation, having all power and authority, in heaven and in earth, given to him as Mediator: Whether, I say, we understand this, of the one or of the other, this must be said of each of them, *He shall be as the light of the morning.*

If we understand the above of an earthly ruler, then the sense is, that he shall be as welcome and grateful to his subjects, as the morning light. He shall be like the rising sun, illustrious and glorious; he shall be like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. The favor of an earthly prince, his good will, and goodness to his subjects, in the gentle and mild administration of his government, is (as David's son, the wisest of men says) as a *cloud of the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass*. But if we understand this of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we may most truly do; then these beautiful figures and metaphors may serve to set forth the glory of his person, and the riches of his grace; and particularly the benefits of his rule and government unto his subjects. Here are two sorts of figures or metaphors, made use of: very elegant, beautiful and apt ones. The first is, *That he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds*. The second is, *that he shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain*.

The first of these we have entered upon, namely that in which the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is compared to the morning light when the sun arises; a morning without clouds. We proposed to consider this passage,

I. As it might respect the coming of Christ in the flesh and his appearance in our nature in this world.

II. As it might respect the discoveries of himself to his people in and after conversion. And

III. As it may respect his government as a Ruler over men, righteous ruling in the fear of God.

NOTE: *Roman Numerals II and III (see above) continued from Sermon IV.*

The first of these has been considered I shall now proceed,

II. To take notice of the discovery, or manifestation, Christ makes of himself to his people in conversion, in a spiritual manner; to which these figurative phrases are applicable; *He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds*.

As the morning light dissipates the darkness of the night, and introduces light into the hemisphere; so the first discovery of Christ unto his people, the revelation of him, in them as the hope of glory, dispels the darkness of their understandings: for the understanding of every man is darkened, yea, and darkness itself. This is the case of God's own people, in their natural state, with respect to divine and spiritual things; but when Christ is discovered and made known to them, then this darkness passes away, it goes off it is no more, comparatively; Christ's children are no longer the children of the night and of darkness, but the children of the day and of the light. Light is introduced into them by Christ's appearing, in a spiritual manner, to their souls, by the everlasting gospel: and in this light, they see light. By and through the light of his Spirit shining into their hearts, they not only discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the just demerit of it, their want of righteousness, the insufficiency of their own, the glory and excellency of the righteousness of

Christ, and the necessity of such a righteousness to appear in before the judgment seat of God: but through his divine light shining into them, they see the glory of Christ's person, the riches of his grace, the fulness and suitableness of his righteousness, and the completeness of his salvation. By the light of the divine word, which enters into them and gives light (*for the entrance of thy word*, says the Psalmist, *giveth light*, Ps. 119:130) they are led into the mysteries of divine grace, and into the wonders of divine love, to behold things which their eyes had never, no never seen before. This morning light, this spring of day to them, dispels there darkness and introduces light into their souls.

And this, often times, and generally speaking, is like the morning light, *sudden and surprising*. As that outward light which shone round Saul at his first conversion was, so that inward light which shines into the hearts of God's people at conversion, is sudden, marvelous and surprising to them. And as the morning light brings *joy and cheerfulness* with it, and makes the whole creation glad; so does spiritual light infused into the heart of a poor sinner. When Christ is first revealed to him, he is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and no wonder, considering him as having a deep sense of sin, the guilt of it upon his conscience, and seeing no way of being delivered from it; at such a time to have Christ the Saviour revealed to him, his righteousness revealed from faith to faith to justify him, his blood to cleanse, his atoning sacrifice to expiate all sin; this must needs gladden his heart. And every new discovery and fresh revelation of him, has such an effect upon the hearts of God's people; and especially if he has been absent from them some time: as it is said of the disciples, when he had been a few days withdrawn from them, and came again, *then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord* (John 20:20).

Once more, as the morning light is of an *increasing* nature, when it breaks forth it spreads, and that irresistibly so is the revelation of Christ unto poor sinners. At first, their sight of him is but glimmering and obscure; they see, as the poor man in the gospel did to whom Christ restored sight, *men as trees walking*: they see things in a confused manner: but when Christ had touched that man again, and bid him look up, he saw all things clearly. So it is with those to whom Christ reveals himself: though their first sight of him may be (lark and obscure, they by degrees obtain a clearer sight of his person, offices and grace. The Spirit of God afresh opens their understandings, increaseth their knowledge; and hereby their path is as *the path of the just, which is as a shining light ,shining more and more unto the perfect day*. Thus the light which is communicated in first conversion, as it grows and increases, is like the light of the morning when the sun rises; when the sun is risen in all its brightness; when there is a serene heaven and a clear sky: so it is with the Lord's people when the Sun of righteousness arises upon them, with healing in his wings, with applications of pardoning grace to their souls: when in his light they see light; for as in the light of the sun, we behold the sun, so they, in the light they receive from him, behold him, can claim him as their own, and say, *this is my beloved, and this is my Friend* (Sol. Song 5:16). *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine* (Sol. Song 6:3). *My Lord and my God* (John 20:28). *He loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal.2:20). When this is the case, Christ is as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth: when they are enabled to say, "who shall separate us from Christ? and from the love of Christ? and from the love of God in Christ?" of which they have now no doubt. It is a morning without clouds.

Sometimes it is indeed with the Lord's. people a dark and cloudy day; a day of thick darkness and gloominess: they know not where they are, or how things are with them; they are ready to call in

question every thing; and walk in darkness and see no light; but when this darkness is dissipated, through the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon them, then it is a morning without clouds. No darkness upon their minds, no doubts hang upon them, no fears about their eternal state, nothing intervenes between Christ and them, or hinders their sight of him; but they, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God.

III. I shall proceed to the application of this metaphor and figure, to the government of Christ as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; especially with regard unto his rule and government, as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign. Let it be observed, that the times of reformation from popery, may, fitly enough, be called the light of the morning, with respect to Christ's kingdom. This is signified in that mysterious book, the Book of the Revelations, chapter 2:28, *and I will give him (that is, him that overcometh) the morning star*. Now that is said after the Thyatirian church state; which is a representation of the Church of God in the times of popish darkness. The Lord promises to give the morning star: that is, the morning star of the reformation, the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the light of his glorious kingdom here upon earth. And a wonderful spread of light there was at that time: which like the light of the morning, increased in every place in the Western parts of the world. This brought on the Sardian church state; in which I apprehend, we now are, and perhaps towards the close of it. The character of that state agrees with ours, that we have a *name to live and are dead* (Rev. 3:1): and yet there are some few names in this our Sardis that have not defiled their garments with bad principles or bad practices. The present state of the church, with respect to light, seems to be well expressed in the prophecy of Zechariah, where it is said, *in that day the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night: but it shall come to pass that at even time it shall be light* (Zech. 14:7). It is so with us with respect to our light in general; it is neither night nor day, clear nor dark. It is not day, as in the times of the apostles, and it is not so dark as it was in the times of popery; but it is a sort of twilight we are in; and though it might be feared, from the growing darkness upon us, that it will issue in an evening twilight, yet it will turn out otherwise: at even time, or when we shall be reckoning the shadows of evening are coming upon us, it will be light, it will turn out a morning twilight. So stands the kingdom of Christ with respect to us; I apprehend the sun is not risen, with that splendor in which it will appear, in the *spiritual* and *personal* reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the *spiritual* reign of Christ, there will be such an illustrious appearance of him, that he shall destroy antichrist with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming: and more especially in his *personal* reign, when *he* himself shall descend in person, and the dead in Christ shall be raised first; when his tabernacle shall be among men, and he will dwell among them, and be the light of the new Jerusalem. Now these states of Christ's kingdom will be attended with *great light* and *great joy*: both of which attend the rising of the *sun*.—*Light*. In the spiritual reign of Christ there will be a great deal of light. Many shall run to and fro; and spiritual knowledge will be increased every where. Then as the waters cover the sea, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Light shall break forth abundantly among all ranks of men in the churches of Christ: the watchmen will see eye to eye, the ministers of the gospel, and private Christians also, will agree in their sentiments about gospel doctrines and gospel ordinances. Yea, the light of that state is said to be *as the light of the moon, and the light of the moon as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold as the light of seven days* (Isa. 30:26). So great will be the light

of that dispensation, that it may truly be said to be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. And especially in the *personal reign* of Christ, when the sun shall no more go down by day, nor the moon by night; when the Lamb shall be the light of the New Jerusalem, and there will no more darkness in any sense: but an everlasting day.

And both these states in which the kingdom of Christ shall appear, will be attended with a great deal of *joy*. When this righteous one, ruling in the fear of God, shall take to himself his great power, and reign in the spiritual state, the four and twenty elders round the Throne will cast their crowns at his feet and say, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." And when he will reign *personally*, then those that have gotten the victory over the beast, and stand upon a sea of glass with harps in their hands, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, "great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The apostles, prophets, and all the people of God will join in one general thanksgiving, one song of praise, to him who hath avenged their blood upon antichrist. Innumerable voices will be heard in the church, saying, "salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments. Amen, Hallelujah." And again they will say, "let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

So then, this morning light, when the sun riseth, this morning without clouds, may very aptly represent the state of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Ruler among men, righteous, ruling in the fear of God.

But I proceed now to take some notice of the Second figure here made use of. *He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain;* which may be applied to Christ himself, and to the influences and benefits his people receive from his government.

The figure may be applied to Christ himself. He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain: so it may point out unto us the nature of Christ as man: his original and descent, springing out of the earth; and the moving, producing cause thereof, the love and favour of God: and the whole may be expressive of his acceptableness and loveliness to his people; which seems to be greatly the design of this figure.

1. It may be considered as pointing out his nature as man. He sprung out of the earth. He is called the *fruit of the earth* (Isa. 4:2); An *handful of corn upon the top of the mountains*, which is part of the fruit of the earth (Ps. 72:16); *a branch out of root of Jesse* (Isa. 50); *a tender plant growing up before the Lord* (Isa. 53:2), and our text says, *He shall be as the tender grass*. Now though this may convey an idea of weakness and infirmity in Christ as man, and which is just; yet there is something more intended. The tenderness and verdure of the grass, and the flourishing circumstances in which it is in the morning (Ps. 90:6), may lead us to observe, that great grace that appeared upon Christ in his human nature, even in the morning of his infancy, of whom it is said, that *he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him* (Luke 2:40). Great grace was upon him then: he increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. Yea, the Spirit of grace, or the grace of the Spirit was bestowed upon him without measure.

This simile of grass, is sometimes made use of in Scripture to express a multitude. The spires of grass are innumerable. Now, though Christ's person is but one; yet he has two natures, human and divine, united in that one person. He is the head of the body, the church, which consists of a variety of members; and he has a spiritual offspring, which are numerous, even as the sand of the sea; a number which no man can number, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. But I said the metaphor conveyed an idea of weakness and infirmity; and so it leads us to consider the weakness of Christ in human nature. He had all the sinless infirmities of that nature; he was, encompassed with infirmity; and was in the esteem of men, a worm, and no man; treated as the most contemptible creature: yea, the apostle says, *he was crucified through weakness* (2 Cor. 13:4). And, as the tender grass is liable to be trodden under foot, and to be cut down; so he, in human nature, was trodden under foot by those *strong bulls of Bashan, which compassed him about* (Ps. 22:12); by whom are meant the rulers of the Jews, both ecclesiastical and civil, as well as Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and his soldiers. He was borne down under their calumnies, their cruel scourgings; and at last brought to the dust of death: for this tender plant was not only bruised for our iniquities; but cut down as the grass of the field, and that for our sins and transgressions.

But he arose again as grass after it is cut down; and therefore the resurrection of the dead, and even of Christ himself, is signified thereby; as in Isaiah 26:19, *Thy dead men shalt live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead*, just as it casts out its herbs and plants, under the influence of rain and dew. So Christ, though he was crucified through weakness, lives by the power of God: and though he was put to death in the flesh, was quickened in the Spirit; and though he was dead, is now a live, and lives for evermore.

2. The original of Christ, in his human nature, is here expressed by the tender grass springing out of the earth. It is true, indeed, he is said to be the *Lord from heaven* (1 Cor. 15:47). He is the Lord: he is Jehovah; and he is from heaven, which is the seat of his habitation and glory; from thence he came, (not by change of place, but by assumption of nature) into our world: therefore is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father, which is in heaven: and because of the glory and excellency of his person, he is said to be above all. But as to his original as man, he is of the earth. He did not descend from heaven, bringing his human nature with him, as he will do when he appears a second time, without sin, unto salvation, he took human nature from the earth; that is, he took it of an earthly woman: *He was made of a woman* (Gal. 4:4). The human nature of Christ was made in secret, in the lowest parts of the earth, and from thence it sprang; which probably is the meaning of that expression, Psalm 85:11, *truth shall spring out of the earth*: that is, he who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). The truth of all promises, prophecies, types, and figures: the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, that sprung out of the earth.

And this may also denote, the *meanness of our Lord's descent as man*. He sprung out of the earth; out of Jesse's family, when that was, as it were, cut down to the roots so he is said to be a *root springing up out of a dry ground* (Isa. 53:2). His supposed father a carpenter, his mother a poor virgin in Israel; which was what disgusted the Jews. *Is not* (say they) *this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? Poor Mary in such a place? Are not his brethren and sisters all with us? Do not we know them; what a mean company they are? what poor people they be? and therefore they treated him with the utmost contempt.*

3. The moving, producing cause of this tender grass springing out of the earth, is ascribed to clear shining after rain. As grass springs up apace, and revives much after a shower of rain, and the clear shining of the sun upon it; so our Lord is represented as growing up in like manner.

By this clear shining after rain, we may understand the love and favour of God; whose favour is light: and when it is manifested, the people of God have light and joy in their souls. Nothing is more desirable to them, than to have the light of that morning, and to walk in that light. So the good-will and favour of God may be compared to rain; for if the favour of an earthly prince, may be said to be as the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass much more the favour of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Now our Lord's springing up as the tender grass, or his appearance, as man, is owing to the love and favour of God. Zechariah, the father of the forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist, in his song, says, that it is *through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us* (Luke 1:78). That is, the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness, which made the glorious day of the gospel: his rising and appearance he ascribes to the free grace and mercy of God. And to this also the angels ascribe the incarnation of our Lord: his coming in the flesh; his springing up as the tender grass out of the earth. They unitedly sing this song, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men* (Luke 2:14). Yea, our Lord himself ascribes his mission, primarily, to the love of God. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). And, indeed, there is no one instance in which the favour, good-will, and loving-kindness of God are so displayed, as in the mission and gift of Christ. The apostle says, that God hath shewn forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7): that is, in his kindness in sending and giving Christ to us, and for us. He observes, that not only the kindness and goodness of God are here expressed, but the riches thereof; yea, the exceeding riches of his grace. The Lord, in order to shew his love to Israel, says, *since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable; and I have loved thee: therefore, will I give men for thee, and people for thy life* (Isa. 43:4). This was doing a great deal; but is nothing, no nothing at all, in comparison of his giving his Son to, and for his people. He gave his own Son, his only begotten Son; and when it is considered for what purpose he was given, may we not say with the apostle, *Herein is love!* herein is love amassed together: herein is love, here it centers; herein is love, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins* (1 John 4:10). For God to send his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice; that this should be his love, and favour, and good-will towards us, to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin; that he should part with him; give him up for us all: herein has he manifested his love in the highest degree. That while we were yet sinners Christ should die for us: O wonderful love! This is the clear shining after rain, to which is owing the descent of our Lord; and his springing up in the world to save poor, lost sinners.

4. This metaphor leads us to view *the loveliness of Christ*. As the grass looks exceeding gay and cheerful, comely and beautiful, after a shower of rain, when the sun shines upon it; so amiable does our Lord appear to his people. This *fruit of the earth, is said to be comely and excellent* (Isa. 4:2): comely and excellent to his saints; to those who have any spiritual sight of him, he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. This fruit of the earth is also said to be *glorious* (Isa. 4:2); which may denote the glory of his divine person, as the Son of God; who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His glory, as Mediator, full of grace and

truth: the glorious man, adorned with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God. His glory after his resurrection from the dead. The glory even of his body; according to which the bodies of the saints at the resurrection morn will be fashioned, His glory at the Father's right hand, as sat down with him upon his throne; angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him (1 Pet. 3:22). And especially in his government; both in his spiritual and personal reign. O how lovely wilt he appear then; when he, and he alone shall be exalted, and reign before his ancients gloriously. Thus this figure and metaphor may be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ,

I thought to have said a few things to show how this may be applied to the influences and benefits his people receive from him, under his government: and then the sense is this; "He shall cause his people, who are like grass springing out of the earth, to be like that, as it appears after clear shining after rain." Or, he shall be to them, who are compared to grass springing out of the earth, more than rain; for so the words may be rendered. That is, he is more to them than rain, and the clear shining after it; but I cannot now enlarge on this subject. To conclude,

Let us learn to bless the Lord for what Christ is already unto us, If he is unto us as the light of the morning, a morning without clouds; if his light has shone into our hearts, and we have had a discernment of spiritual things; let us bless God for this light, and say, as the Psalmist did, *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits* (Ps. 103:1, &c.) And again, *blessed be the Lord, who hath shewn us light* (Ps. 118:27). Spiritual light, caused light to shine into our dark hearts, and gave us the light of the knowledge of the glory of himself, in the face of Jesus Christ. Let it be our great concern, therefore, to shew forth the praises of him, who has called us out of darkness, into his marvelous light: and to walk as children of the light, and of the day; putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the whole armor of light: putting on Christ Jesus; and making no provision for the flesh, to obey it in the lust thereof.

And this may lead us to look for what will be hereafter, when Christ will come down, like the rain upon the new mown grass, and like showers of rain to water the earth; to those days, when the righteous shall flourish, and there will be abundance of peace, as long as the sun and moon endureth.

THE INFINITE
CONDESCENSION OF JEHOVAH,
MANIFESTED IN
DWELLING ON THE EARTH

1 KINGS 8:27.

But will God indeed dwell on the Earth?

Solomon, having finished the building of the temple, and placed all the vessels thereof in their proper situation, the Lord took up his residence therein; which was signified by the cloud filling the temple, a symbol of the glorious presence of God; and Solomon observes upon it, the Lord hath said, that he *would dwell in the thick darkness.*

Solomon and the people of Israel, being gathered together for the dedication of the house of the Lord, he begins it with blessing the people; congratulating them upon the building of the temple; wishing them all happiness in such an enjoyment; and praying for them, that they might have the presence of God therein. He informs them that David, his father, had it first in his heart to build this house, which was acceptable to the Lord; but for some reasons, he was not suffered to do it. It was the pleasure of God, that he, Solomon, his son, should do it; which was accordingly performed. Then he spread forth his hands in prayer unto God, and addressed him as the One only living God, and said, *Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.* He addressed him as the only living and true God; none like him, or besides him. None to be compared with him for his nature, and the perfections of it: for the works of his hands, and the blessings of his goodness. He addresses him as a covenant-keeping God, and as a merciful God; as he had proclaimed himself long before. He takes notice of the promises he had made; of one he had already fulfilled, as to the building of the temple; and he makes mention of another, concerning a succession of the kings of Israel in the house of David; and doubted not of the performance of it, since God was faithful that had promised. Then, in the words I have read, expresses his admiration, that God should dwell upon earth, *Will God indeed dwell on the earth ?* Is it fact? Will he truly and really dwell on the earth? Is there no doubt to be made of it? May it be credited? Is it not a thing almost incredible? at least, how wonderful and amazing is it, that he should dwell upon the earth! for we are not to understand these words as expressive of any diffidence, hesitation, or doubt in Solomon concerning it; but as expressive of admiration; *Will God indeed dwell on the earth!* Will he, who dwells on high, and who humbles himself to look upon things in heaven and upon the earth; will he deign to dwell with men upon earth! It is amazing that he should; considering his immensity, for he adds, *Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee!* He is

that God, who fills heaven and earth with his presence; and is not circumscribed in place, or by space: no; he is the immense and infinite Being. As he is not bounded by time, so neither by space; and how much less, says Solomon, in this house that I have built. This, magnificent as it was; this, though very spacious and probably more grand than any building in the known world, before or since; yet even this could not contain the Most High, who dwells not in temples made with hands; that is, in such sense as to be circumscribed by them.

God is an immense Being: he is every where: in heaven, earth, and hell. There is no fleeing from his presence: let a person be where he will, in any part of the universe, he is not out of the reach of God, or at a distance from him. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* (Ps. 139:8-10) God is every where, by his power; upholding and maintaining the works of his hands. He is every where, by his providence; taking care of; and governing all his creatures. He is every where, by his Omniscience; for it reaches to all places and things. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good and more especially, his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth;* the various parts of the globe, where his people are, *to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him.* He is every where; yet heaven is more especially the place of his residence; or where he displays his glory, and makes it the most manifest; hence it is called his habitation, *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness* (Isa. 63:15). The Lord dwelleth in his temple, and his throne is in the heavens: yea, heaven itself is his throne, on which he sits. There is his palace, there he keeps his court; there are his attendants, his ministering servants wait upon him: his angels are all around him; they behold the face of our Father, which is in heaven, and therefore are styled the angels of heaven. It is therefore amazing, that this God, who is immense, and whose glorious presence is more especially in heaven should dwell upon earth. *Will God indeed dwell upon the earth?* He hath formed the earth to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18); but by whom? not only by the beasts of the field, but more especially by man, the chief of the lower creation; yet, surely, not for himself. He hath made both the heavens and the earth; but the former he hath retained for his own dwelling place, and the latter he hath allotted to the sons of men. *The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men* (Ps. 115:16). It is, therefore, wonderful that he should dwell upon the earth, which he hath given to the children of men, to be inhabited by them; and the rather, since the earth is his footstool. The heaven is his throne, on which he sits: and the earth is his footstool. It is not usual for kings and great princes of the earth, to sit upon their footstool; well, therefore, may the question be put in the manner it is, *Will God indeed dwell upon the earth?* and especially, upon earth, in its present situation; and as it has been ever since the fall of Adam? By sin the earth is defiled and corrupted, is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? It was defiled by the sin of man; it was cursed for his sake; *Cursed is the ground for thy sake* (says the Lord to Adam); *thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth* (Gen. 3:17, 18). It was more and more defiled and corrupted by the sins of men in after times; as by those of the men of the old world. The whole earth was corrupted, and filled with violence; for all men had corrupted their way in times of Noah; for which reason a flood was brought upon the earth. In after times corruption increased; and indeed in all periods of time, there has been abounding of sin, whereby the land mourns; because of cursing, swearing, lying, shedding of blood, and the like. The earth, therefore, *is reserved to fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men* (2 Pet. 3:7). Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? how amazing it is!

Will he dwell with the inhabitants of such an earth as this? It was his pleasure, and has been his condescension at one period of time, and another, to look down upon the earth, to see if there were any that did understand what was good, if there were any that followed it: and the result of such a survey, has been this: *There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* Now is it not amazing that a God of purity should dwell on earth with such persons as these? It is marvelous condescension in him to *look* upon things in heaven and in earth. It is a wonderful instance of his goodness, that he should regard sinful man in a providential way: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* (Ps. 8:4). Visitest him in a providential way. How much more astonishing is it, that God should *dwell* with men, in a spiritual way and manner! that God, *who inhabiteth eternity*, who *dwells in the high and holy place*, and *whose name is holy*; should dwell also with such who are of *a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* These words may be referred either,

I. To the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his tabernacling in human nature, upon this our earth; in order to work out the salvation of his people. This is a most amazing instance of his condescension; and with respect to which, such words as these may well be used. Very probable it is, that Solomon had a view unto it; since the temple that he built was a type of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

II. They may be referred also to God's dwelling among his people; or his divine presence in the churches of Christ; which is also an instance of amazing grace; and with regard to which, such words may well be used, *Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth?*

I. This passage may very well be referred to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his dwelling upon earth among men, in order to work out their salvation: "*Will God indeed dwell upon earth?*" God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God: he was to dwell, and he has dwelt upon earth; but it is marvelous, it is astonishing indeed!

1. He is *God*: yet he tabernacled in our nature. He is *the Word, that was with God, and was God.* This may have respect unto that event, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt*, or tabernacled, *among us* (John 1:14): in allusion to the tabernacle of Moses, which was a type of Christ's human nature. His human nature is *the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man* (Heb. 8:2). So the temple of Solomon, built in some respects after the model of the tabernacle, was a type of Christ's human nature. *Destroy* (says our Lord) *this temple* (meaning his body), *and in three days I will raise it up.* It was the Word of God that became incarnate and dwelt among men, *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God* (John 1:1); truly and properly God. The *true God*; for says the apostle John, *We know that the Son of God is come*; that is, come into the world in our nature; and we have understanding of him, that *he is the true God, and, eternal life* (1 John 5:20): the author and giver of eternal life; having obtained it through his obedience and death. He is the *great God*, as he must needs be; since he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the *great God*, and our Savior Jesus Christ." He has all the *perfections of the Godhead* in him. All the Father hath, he has; so that he that sees the one, sees the other; Christ being the *express image of his Person*,

thought it not robbery to be equal with him; the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him. All this could not be said with any propriety, had he not been truly and properly God.

He is the *Maker of all things*. By the Word that was made flesh, *all things were made, and without him was not any thing made, that was made* (John 1:1, 2, 3). All things were created by him, whether visible or invisible; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. He hath laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands. *He is over all, God blessed for evermore* (Rom. 9:5). He is high above all nations, and great above all creatures: he has obtained a more excellent name than they, being of a more excellent nature: for to which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" All the Angels of God are called upon to worship him (Heb. 1:6); and for very good reason, because they are all his creatures. All men, good and bad men, are subject unto him: he dwells, and ever did, in the highest heavens. In the sixty eighth Psalm, which is a Psalm concerning Christ, it is said of him, that he *rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah*; therefore he is called the Lord from heaven. He is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father; and is said to be in heaven, whilst he was here upon earth (John 3:13).

Now it is amazing, that this great, glorious, and illustrious person should dwell upon earth. *Will God indeed dwell upon earth?* God, the Word, the Maker of all things, who is over all, God blessed for evermore, who dwells in the highest heavens; and will he dwell on the earth? Verily he will: and most certainly he has dwelt upon the earth. It was proposed to him in the ancient council and covenant of peace, that he should assume our nature, and dwell upon earth with mortal men: he agreed to it, and said, *Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God* (Ps. 60:7), I come in human nature: I come into the world, and among men; I delight to do thy will; that is, to obtain redemption for lost sinners. This was proposed; and to this he agreed; thenceforward he is represented as rejoicing in the habitable parts of this earth; in that part of the world, where he himself had agreed to dwell; and upon those spots of ground, where he knew those people would dwell for whom he became a surety and, a Saviour. His delights were with the sons of men: and we have various instances of his appearing on earth, long before he dwelt upon it. He appeared in Eden's garden immediately after the fall of our first parents. "They heard the voice of the Lord, God: or as the ancient Jewish paraphrase has it, "They heard the voice of the Word of the Lord their God:" of that eternal Logos, that Word which was in the beginning with God, was God (John 1:1); and was to dwell with man upon earth.

He appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and gave him, not only an assurance that he should have a son born to him at such a time: but predicted the immediate destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He appeared in the form of a man to Jacob, wrestling with him till the break of day. Under the emblem of flaming fire, he appeared to Moses in the bush, and sent him to be the deliverer of Israel. He appeared to Manoah and his wife, declaring his name to be *secret*, or *wonderful*; and so to many others. Now those appearances of his, were presages that he would dwell upon earth: they were pledges and earnest, assuring the saints, that thus it would be; they seemed to indicate a kind of delight and pleasure the Son of God had in this, as it were desirous of the time when he should tabernacle among men.

Besides these appearances, which gave hints of what would be, there were certain prophecies concerning it. The first prophecy and promise was that *the seed of the woman should bruise the*

serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Eve, perhaps, had reference to this, when she said, upon the birth of her first born, *I have gotten a man from the Lord* (Gen. 6:1): or, as it may be rendered, *I have gotten the man the Lord*: which many Jewish interpreters understand of the Messiah; imagining (though she was mistaken), that she had got the man, the Lord Messiah. However, it is certain that in the time of Job there were assurances of this. Job expresses his full assurance of it: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth* (Job 9:1). So various other prophecies indicate the same, and point out even the very land in which the Messiah should dwell. *Salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land* (Ps. 85:9); that is, the glorious person promised to be the Saviour, who would work out the salvation of his people, and who is the brightness of the Father's glory, is coming to dwell in this our land, the land of Canaan. For which reason it is sometimes called *Immanuel's land* (Isa. 8:8); because he was to be born, dwell and suffer in that land. Sometimes particular parts of that land are pointed out; as Galilee and the parts adjacent (Isa. 9:1): yea, the mount of Olives is said to be a place whereon his feet should stand (Zech. 14:4); and it is well known, from the Evangelical history, that he was frequently upon that mount in prayer; and it was from that mount he ascended to heaven.

In the fulness of time, according to all these hints and predictions, he came into this world; was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He came, not by any change of place, for that is impossible: but by taking to his divine person, the human nature. For we are not to entertain such gross sentiments of him, as though, when he became incarnate, he moved from place to place, from heaven to earth; for even when he had assumed our nature and dwelt among us, he was in the bosom of the Father: *the only begotten Son, which is* (it is not said, *which was* in the bosom of the Father, and is now come from thence; but which is) *in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him* (John 1:18). Now it was, that he *tabernacled in the flesh*, as before observed. And among sinful men chiefly did he dwell when here upon earth; which gave umbrage to the scribes and pharisees, those self justiciaries, who could not brook that one who set up for a prophet, and appeared to be a holy man, should have conversation with profane sinners. It is said of him, by way of reproach, *this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them* (Luke 15:2). Hence the objection made by the scribes and pharisees: *Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?* (Matthew 9:11), which being reported to him, he made this reply; *They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick* (Matthew 9:12). Signifying, that these proud pharisees were whole, in their own esteem; and so stood in no need of him as a physician. But there were others that *were sick*; distressed persons, that were brought to a sense of themselves. To them he was a physician; and thus he vindicates his character. As if he should say, I am a physician, and I act in character. I have nothing to do with those that are whole: my business lies with those that are affected with soul maladies, and are sensible of them. With whom should I be, as a physician, but with them? But after all he could not shelter himself from their opprobrious language, calling him *a friend of publicans and sinners*.

The persons whom he conversed with upon earth were sinful men. Upon earth he was some time. He was not (as in his former appearances, under the Old Testament dispensation) here for a few minutes, or hours at most; but he *dwelt* among men. He was not as a way-faring man, that continues only for a night; but dwelt many years among men upon earth. We read of him at different periods of his life. When he was about two years old, as we may suppose, that shocking massacre was made by Herod, of infants of two years old and under. Supposing him to be about that age, he ordered the infants of that age to be slain. We hear of him at twelve years of age, when he went with his parents to Jerusalem to keep the Passover; and was found among the Doctors in the temple.

We hear of him again when he was about thirty years of age, when he came from Galilee to John, to be baptized of him. How long he lived after cannot be said with any exactness; but at least he must abide upon earth four or five years more, since we read of four Passovers that passed between the time of his baptism and his death. When he had done the work he came about, which was the salvation of his people, then his life was taken away, and he was received up into heaven, by his divine Father, in the sight of his apostles. There Stephen saw him sitting [*standing*] at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56); and every believer, by faith, beholds him crowned with honour and glory, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he must be till the time of the restitution of all things; and then he will come again, according to his promise. We expect Jesus our Saviour from heaven, and he will most certainly come. *To them that look for him, he will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.* When this earth has been refined and purified by fire, he will descend, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell among them.

But is it not amazing that the Son of God, the Word of God, he who is truly God, should dwell upon earth, as he did at his first coming? to which this passage chiefly refers; that he should dwell upon earth, who says, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was! When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water; before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the world, then I was by him" (Prov.8:23-30). That he who was before the earth existed, should dwell upon this earth, how astonishing! He must have a place of residence before, and where was he? it may be answered, He was with God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (John 1:1): with his divine Father; in his bosom, as it is elsewhere said (John 1:18). Yet in the fulness of time, he came forth from the Father, and came into this world. Is it not amazing that he should dwell upon earth, by whom the earth was made? *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not* (John 1:10); even the same glorious person that was made flesh and dwelt among us, with whom, and in comparison of whom, the whole earth, and all its inhabitants, are as *nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.* He sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants of it are as grasshoppers before him; yet such has been his condescension and goodness as to dwell with men upon earth. He who is the great God has been manifest in the flesh. He who is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, has been the child born and the Son given (Isa. 9:6). He who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, has been found in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant, walking up and down upon this earth of ours. How astonishing is this! *Will God indeed dwell on earth?* So it was to be; so it has been. And the wonder is the greater, when we consider what it was he came into this world to do! It was, not merely to instruct men in divine and spiritual things. He was indeed a teacher sent of God, as Nicodemus justly observes (John 3:2). He taught the way of God in truth, plainly and perfectly. Never man spake like him. He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes and pharisees. He was sent to preach the Gospel to various cities; for which he was abundantly qualified, being anointed with the Spirit of God, without measure, to preach glad tidings to the meek.

He went about throughout Judea and Galilee, preaching the gospel of God; but this was far from being the principal thing for which he came and dwelt upon our earth: it was to work out the salvation of his people. He *came*, as he himself says, *to seek and save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10): lost men, lost in Adam: so lost that they could never find the way to heaven. He came to save sinners, even the worst and chief of sinners. This is the glory of the gospel, the fulness, the

marrow of it: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief* (2 Tim. 1:15). He became our *God*, our near kinsman, and dwelt among us, in order to redeem us from sin, from Satan, and from the curse of the law: this was his errand into the world. In order to this, he spent his life, attended with the greatest poverty and meanness, difficulties and sorrows, which issued in death itself. He spent his life upon earth in much poverty and meanness, being born of poor parents, brought up in a mean manner: when arrived at man's estate, and entered on his public ministry, he had *not where to lay his head*; as he himself expresses it (Matthew 8:20). He was, in a sort, beholden to others for his support, though Lord of all. How amazing is this! yet so it was: for he came *not to be ministered unto*, to be served in state, as princes are; but to be a servant to others. He spent his life upon earth, attended not only with meanness, but with great affliction; for he was a man of sorrow, from his cradle to his cross. Many were the troubles he met with from the temptations of Satan, from his own disciples, and still more from the Jews: according to that prediction, *Who shall declare his generation?* (Isa.53:8); or the men of that generation in which he lived; their barbarous and ill usage of the Messiah, which issued in the shameful and painful death of the cross. All this he underwent to work out our salvation. How amazing is this! *Will God indeed*, the God of heaven and earth, God over all, blessed for ever, *dwell upon earth?* and for such a purpose?

II. This may also be referred to God's dwelling among his people, or his divine presence in the churches of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, of them that love him, and keep his commandments (by which they shew that they love him), that his *Father will love them*, as well as he, and adds, *We will come unto them, and we will make our abode with them* (John 14:23). More than one divine person must be here intended; for our Lord says, *We will make our abode with them*. The Father comes and makes his abode with his people, in a spiritual sense, as he promises ; "I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. 6:16). Who says this? God: he that says, *He will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters*.

The Spirit of the Lord dwells in the saints on earth, *Ye are the temple of God*, says the apostle (1 Cor. 3:16); *and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*. This distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate man; *ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you* (Rom. 8:9).

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, dwells in the saints, in their hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). Whoever believes in Christ, eats his flesh, and drinks blood; dwells in Christ, and Christ in him (John 6:56). He dwells in all his churches, as in his proper house; according to that saying, *Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end* (Heb. 3:6). He dwells among them as his family, and provides for them food, raiment, and every thing they stand in need of; or that is for their spiritual pleasure and delight. He dwells among them, as in his palace; they being the city of the great king. He dwells among them as in his kingdom: for a gospel church state is called *the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 25:1); where Christ is acknowledged as king by his saints; and where he reigns as king; and his dominion is, for ever and ever. Here he dwells, and here he will dwell for evermore; for he has promised to be with his churches and ministers to the end of the world.

But particularly, he dwells in the hearts of true believers; dwells with them upon earth: not in such a general way as he may be said to dwell with all men; in as much as all live, move, and have their being in him: nor in so special a sense, as the divine Logos, or Word, dwells hypostatically in the human nature: nor yet in so sublime a sense, as he is in the Father, and the Father in him; but he lives in them, as the author of life; and he dwells in them in order to revive them, *to revive the spirit of the humble*. He dwells in their *hearts*, not merely in their heads, as in some: dwells not upon their tongues, as in them who profess to know him, and do not, experimentally; but he dwells in their hearts, these everlasting doors being thrown open by his grace: there he sets up his throne, and *reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life*. He dwells (and O, how astonishing is it!) where sin dwells; for sin dwells in the saints. Christ dwells where no good thing dwells but himself; *for in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing* (Rom. 7:18). What good thing there is in his people, is put there by himself. He dwells (and how astonishing is it!) where he is often slighted; as he was by the church when he stood at her door and knocked; and desired she would open to him, when she said; *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* (Sol. Song 5:3). He dwells, I say, where he is often slighted, where he is provoked, where his Holy Spirit is grieved, where he is rebelled against; which sometimes occasion him to withdraw his *comfortable* presence.

This is expressive of union between him and his people, who are members of his body, and one spirit with him. It is also expressive of communion with him; *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. And this communion they may expect *to* experience in the use of means; for where the *shepherds pitch their tents*, or where the word is preached, and the ordinances administered, there he is. He is held in these galleries, and here believers behold him in his beauty. Where he records his name he comes and blesses; and where two or three are met together in his name, there he is in the midst of them. He dwells with his people for ever more; for though they may be at a loss for his sensible presence, at times, and inquire where he is; yet he is not really withdrawn from them. He dwells with them still; as with Mary, when she said, *they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him*. Christ was at that time just at her elbow, but she knew him not. Christ never leaves nor forsakes his people: he dwells in them and they in him.

But I shall now come to a close. How astonishing, then, are the grace and condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ, in dwelling among men upon earth! You that know Christ, and have believed in him, know this to be true. *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich*.

If you enjoy spiritual communion with him, and know the sensible inhabitation of him in your hearts by faith, make use of those means which he has directed unto, an attendance upon his word and ordinances: for our Lord hath assured those that love him and keep his commandments; that is, observe his word and ordinances, from a principle of love to him, that he *will come unto them, and make his abode with them*.
