

THE REIGN OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR

A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,

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AT NORTH ROAD CHAPEL, BRENTFORD,

ON EASTER MONDAY MORNING, 6th APRIL, 1874.

“For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet” — {1 Corinthians. 15: 25}.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is unspeakably important. I am not sorry that the Corinthian Church disagreed about it, though I am constantly praying that the Lord will heal the breaches of Zion, and give His people one heart and one way in relation to the great gospel of His grace; but I am rather glad that there was a contention about this doctrine; for, humanly speaking, had it not been so, we had never had this fifteenth chapter of the 1st of Corinthians. “ Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead ?” Ah! error is old-fashioned, almost as old as truth, but not quite ; error did not begin with time, and it shall be annihilated just before the end of time; for truth was first in the field ; and will retain the field, and will be last in the field, as the Lord liveth. Are we not thankful for the marvelous revelation which this chapter contains concerning the resurrection of

these bodies of ours; is there not something exceedingly cheering in the fact that they are purchased property; that they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the period is coming when they shall be as spiritual as the Spirit of God can cause them to be; and the time is coming when they shall be as thoroughly pervaded by the Spirit of God as our souls will be. We often lose sight of the fact that the Holy Ghost will have much to do in the resurrection of our bodies. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." The Holy Ghost will, therefore, enter into the dust of every saint, and fill it in every part with life, and the body will be raised from the grave filled with the Holy Ghost; and the immortal eyes, (for the eyes which are now mortal will be immortal,) will be turned towards the reigning Saviour, the descending Head of the Church, and a transformation will follow; and immortality and spirituality, such as I cannot describe, will be the grand outcome of all. We shall see Him; we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, here dwells gloriously and comprehensively upon the resurrection of the body, and reasons in a manner which is almost peculiar to himself—for he was a wonderful logician, and his reasoning's in this chapter are very masterly and comprehensive, and such as can never be successfully controverted. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "And if Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins." But he says, to sum it all up in a

word or two, it Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead ; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." How disappointing this must be to hell! The very nature that was ruined is the nature that restores again; the very nature that brought in sin is the very nature that carries it out; and the very nature that brought in death is the nature that shall destroy death: "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Thus the Apostle proceeded to reason, until He said, "But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming: then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Let us look at the three branches into which our subject naturally divides itself. First, the nature; secondly, the necessity; and thirdly, the results of the reign of Jesus Christ our Lord. He must reign; how will He reign, and what is the nature of His reign? He must reign—then it seems that there is a necessity for it. He must reign, and what shall be the results? All enemies shall be put under His feet.

First, the nature of the reign of King Immanuel, our dear and blest Redeemer. I may say, by way of preface, that Christ's right to reign is a native right, a delegated right, an acquired right, and a universally acknowledged right. First, Christ's right to reign is a native right; for He is essentially over all God blessed for ever. But His right

to reign is a delegated right. The Father, addressing His Son as man and mediator, said, "Yet have I set my King upon My holy hill of Zion;" so that the Lord Jesus Christ, in relation to His manhood, and in relation to His mediation, is the appointed and delegated King. A throne was, if I may so speak, erected for Him, and He was appointed by God to occupy it; but that throne, and its occupant relate to the covenant of eternal grace, and the salvation of sinners. Our Lord's right to reign is also an acquired right. If I may so illustrate it, yonder was His throne in the highest heavens, and upon that throne were His royal robes, and crown, and sceptre; down here, under a broken law, was Jesus Christ Himself, bearing the sins of His people in the depths of humiliation, as a sufferer under the curse of a broken law; and His business was to honor the law that He was under, to annihilate the sin that was upon Him; to expiate the guilt that He came to save His people from, and to bring into everlasting harmony all the attributes and perfections of God; and then, having done that, to go to His throne, and put His hand upon it, and say, "I have a right to sit here, and a right to reign over all for ever and ever." There were between Christ and His throne rivers of curses, there was an ocean of damnation, and all the fires of hell due to the Church of God, and Jesus Christ's way to His throne lay straight through all; and He did not in order to avoid the way go by a circuitous route to reach His throne. Had He done so, justice would have barred the gates of heaven against Him, and those royal robes and crown He had never worn on high ; but He went straight to His throne, and bled His way thereto, and put out the fires of hell as He travelled on and expiated

guilt, and at the very end of a broken law the cross was set up, and the triumphant Conqueror hung there, till He said, " It is finished !" and died; and thus He acquired a right to sit upon that throne, and be King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the only Ruler of princes. It is a universally acknowledged right. Hell acknowledges it, and gnashes its teeth, whilst it does so, wishing there were something wrong in the reign and sovereignty of Jesus Christ on the throne; but though " clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne," and angels look with pleasure and delight, and proclaim the sovereignty of our Lord. And we with our poor little powers pass on through troubles and trials, rejoicing in the fact that the Lord reigneth, and that He has a right to reign over all for ever and ever.

I notice that the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is a glorious demonstration of a glorious fact. The fact which it demonstrates is, that salvation is a finished work. This just suits me. It seems to be the very best thing in connection with the government of God, that having resolved to save sinners, and people the heavens, he has done it effectually and completely, and in a God-like manner. I am so satisfied concerning the perfection of the work of Christ, and the necessity for that perfection, that I am quite prepared to say, that if a single stain of guilt had been left un-removed, or a single spot had been unwashed away, since God requires perfection in all that are saved, that spot 'would have been the cause of my ruin for ever and ever.

*“Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know;
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”*

The reign of Christ is a glorious demonstration of this glorious fact. The question is this: Where is Christ? The answer is: In heaven, on the throne. Then the conclusion that necessarily follows is this:—If Christ, Immanuel, as a Saviour, is in heaven, and on the throne, the great business of salvation is finished, and God is honored, and the Church is saved ; for the enthronement of Immanuel is a conditional matter viewed in certain relations, and justice would not have consented to it, and equity and righteousness would never have put the crown upon His head, if He had not fulfilled the Mediatorial conditions which were presented to Him by His Father. And therefore, dear friends, since Jesus Christ is on the throne, the fires of wrath are quenched, its vials are empty; for Cod poured them all upon the head and heart of His dear Son. The curses of a broken law are all spent, and hell is an impossibility. To send a sinner to hell for a debt which was paid by Jesus Christ, would be un-Godlike, and such conduct would un-deify Jehovah Himself. No, my friends, Christ is on the throne: the inference is this, —He has a right to be there, and that right is an acquired one. He has paid the debt, and fulfilled His engagements, and the conditions of His enthronement; and in the fulfillment of those conditions there are a ransomed church, a perfected bride, and harmonized perfections on the part of Cod; and

there is a law in the ark of the covenant, and not on Mount Sinai, and covering the law is a lid called the mercy-seat, and on that lid is Jehovah Himself,—the mute and satisfied law constituting a part of the very throne upon which He sits. Since Christ is on His throne, there is at Golgotha, once the place of a skull, where death and damnation raged and prevailed, a fountain opened, and that fountain diffuses a fragrance everywhere, penetrating heaven itself; and the sweet sacrifice of Jesus Christ has created a new atmosphere for heaven, and for God, and the sinner; not such an atmosphere as God and Adam met in, and conversed in, or as God and angels live in ; but an atmosphere whose qualities are such as are required by a pardoning God, and sinners that deserve to go to hell, but are saved sovereignly with an everlasting salvation. O brethren, it will take us a whole eternity to explore or to contemplate these great mysteries! He is on His throne, and He wears the brightest crown, and not a crown is too bright for Him. If I had a hundred hearts, He should have them, if He would, and wash and save them all; and if my fears were ten thousand fold more numerous than they are, so deeply indebted to Him am I that every one of those fears should crown Him Lord of all. And therefore yon see, in the coronation and enthronement of our dear Lord, that there is a fountain for sin, or He would not be on His throne; you see that there is a wardrobe full of the garments of salvation; were it not so, He would not be on His throne. The wardrobe is not empty, the robes are there, and they are made to fit sinners such as Magdalene and Saul, and you and me, and all the ransomed throng. Christ having done all that justice, and equity, and

truth required Him to do.

*"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His throne;
Spread their triumphant wings, and cried,
The glorious work is done!"*

And He is there, and must reign, "until He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Notice next, that the reign of Jesus Christ is an all-comprehending reign. What is there in heaven that lies beyond the reach of His regal power, His royal and His reigning authority? There is not an angel there but whom He governs, and there is not a thought there but what He directs. There is not a thought here on the earth, but what he understands and over-rules; and bless His name! there are millions of thinkers, and millions of thoughts here, which are directed by Jesus Christ; but it would not be right to say, that there is not a thought on earth but what is directed by Him, for some of my thoughts are directed by sin and the devil; but in that world up there, where our Lord is enthroned in glory, every thought is directed by King Jesus. And what thinkers there are there! I love thought, especially when my mind is a little free, and when my thoughts fly out a little; and I love thinking, and I have sometimes peculiar ideas of the happiness of heaven, in relation to the activities of the mind. Heaven is a world of thought, a world of thinking minds, and every mind is baptized, immersed in divine light, and there is not a streak of error in the light of that glorious world. Above all those thinkers, above all those minds, there is another mind, and above all those shining

crowns there is a brighter crown than all, and that is the mind of Christ, the thought of Christ, and the crown of the dear Redeemer. Oh, He governs every angel's thought, and the thought of every spirit that is made perfect there, and every feeling and every motive in that glory world serves King Immanuel; and then He reigns in heaven over all the grace that is laid up for sinners on the earth. No parcel, if I may so speak, leaves heaven without the permission and knowledge of King Jesus ; and we have grace in parts, a little yesterday, a little to-day, and a little to-morrow ; a sermon here, and a sermon there—and all this grace comes from heaven—not a single stream but what proceeds from His throne, and not a single parcel but what comes by His authority; and if you could only look,—but we seize it as soon as it comes, and take time no to reflect: if you could only look at the comfort that Jesus sends you, you would see that it is stamped with His dear name, and has the authority of Heaven upon it. Angels stand before Him, and are ready to fulfill in the twinkling of an eye—Oh how they love Him !— His high commands. They fly at His nod ; the look of His eye directs them; and whilst they are before the throne, His charms and beauties evermore allure them, and the angel that is sent to attend a crossing sweeper all the day long, is as happy in his work as that one who stands before Immanuel's throne. They find their heaven in obeying the behests of King Jesus there. And then what shall we say about the Gospel? Where is it? Between the two covers of this book. Jesus Christ's name, influence, power, and authority, appear everywhere. Take the promise that was very sweet to your hearts twenty years ago, and come to it to-day, and read it, and

analyze it, and try to apply it. Perhaps it yields no comfort now; and yet you say it was so applied to me twenty years ago, that I remember it well even now. I was so carried away that I thought of Paul's words, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell but now these words yield no comfort. What is the reason? Jesus reigns, and He must reign; and He reigns in, and by, and over the Word, and over every minister of the Word. I wish He reigned more experimentally in this poor heart of mine. A brother said to me last Friday, "You are not your own master, John." If I were, it would be such a fertile mind, and be so full of thought, and never be otherwise than at liberty in the pulpit. I would never be shut up, I would preach, oh yes I would! But the fact is, I am not a good judge of what is best for the people. If I had the reins for a quarter of an hour, I should do more mischief than a little. You are driving a trap through Fleet-street, and beside you sits you little son, and it requires all your attention to guide the horse amidst the hundreds of vehicles, and the child wants the reins—he could manage the matter, to be sure he could: but you know better than to put them into his hands, although you love him, and because you love him, you deny his request. No, Jesus reigns, and He says, No, my child, I will hold the reins, and the whip too. I will guide you with my counsel, and afterwards receive you to My glory. You are passing through ten thousand dangers to glory, and if you had the reins, you would run into the first one that comes. And what is it in connection with providence that He does not preside over? Oh bless His name, His Almighty arm is long enough to reach the circumference of Divine providence; His throne is its centre, and

as he sits upon it, His omnipotence reaches the utmost limits of the circle, and

*"All shall come, and last, and end,
As shall please our heavenly Friend."*

With regard to Zion, He reigns there; and with regard to hell, yes, He has His bits in the jaw's of the devil himself. I thank Him for revealing that fact. The devil is chained. " I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou earnest." King Jesus thus holds Satan with bit and bridle. I was thinking the other day in relation to the power of Satan, and the superior power of the Saviour, that without the reign of the Saviour we could not lie in our beds at night, and without the providential reign of Christ we could not walk with safety in the streets, nor in the beautiful country lanes here. There are latent forces enough in the world to burn it up in a few hours, but there is a very strong hand upon them, and that is the hand of Him about whose reign we are trying to speak this morning.

His reign is also an all-fulfilling reign. What is He fulfilling by His operations on the throne? "I wept much," said John, {Revelation. 5}. "because no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." And I beheld, and lo, instead of seeing a lion, I saw a lamb—for Jesus is a lion as to His

reign over His enemies, and a lamb as to His sacrifice for the sins of His people. John says, "There stood a lamb as it had been slain, and he came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, and proceeded to open the seals thereof." Christ has that book of divine purposes and decrees before Him, and King Jesus on the throne opens its seals, and,

*"Here He exalts neglected worms,
To sceptres and a crown;
And there the following page He turns,
And treads a monarch down."*

All that, my dear friends, is the result of the fact that Jesus holds the reins, and as He moves a particular rein, an empire falls or rises, an emperor falls from his throne, or a beggar is raised from the dunghill. Then again, by His reign, He fulfils the demands of His own blood, for our Lord listens to Himself. The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel. And the blood of Christ demands at least two things; first, everlasting honors to Him that shed it; and secondly, eternal honors and everlasting crowns for you and me, and Jesus sits upon the throne to fulfill the demands of His own blood. But then again, our Lord has the Bible before Him, and I mean by that, that He keeps in view all the great facts of the Gospel, and all the precious promises of God; and as He reigns, He is fulfilling the Bible, and making good the Word that He and His Father have spoken. God is not a man that He should lie, said the wizard Balaam. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" How does He make it good?" The Word that fell from

His lips as a promise shall be made good by the operations of His hands, for what the rails are to the locomotive that the purposes of God are to the operations of His power. The Lord's purposes are laid down right through eternity, and King Jesus is travelling on them. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." This is an object of the most unbounded faith on the part of His people. He will be trusted, not traced; for He giveth no account of any of His doings. Lord, what will happen tomorrow? What is that to thee? Follow thou Me. Lord, what shall this man do? What is that to thee? Leave it to Me; I am on the throne; I am too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

*"O that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what my Maker saith,
Whose word can never fail."*

A few remarks on the remainder of the subject,—the necessity for the reign of Christ. "He must reign." In the very nature of things, the providence and the grace of God must have a head, and the universe must have a head. God did not make the world, and leave it in a state of anarchy. The world is governed by natural laws. Who presides over them? And who made them? And what is behind the laws of nature? We are bound to declare that there is a vast amount of infidelity in connection with much of the teachings of natural science in these days. No God presiding over the world or no God presiding over the laws that govern the world! A world without a God, a ship like this without a captain or a pilot, a work like this without an

author! Supreme, prodigious infidelity! He must reign, to say nothing for a moment about His Mediation, He must reign to govern the universe. He must reign to perpetuate His cause. If He vacated the throne, or left the operations of His omnipotent grace for an hour, the church of God would collapse and sink into ruin, for we are not self-supplying or self-sufficient, or self-supporting. Look at the cause of Christ, and see the necessity for His reign. Consider its weight. Who but an omnipotent being could sustain the weight of an interest like that of Christianity. The weight of popery is mighty; but it rests upon its own basis, and will crush its own foundation by-and-bye, and sink into everlasting ruin. Lord, hasten it in Thy time. But we have in relation to Christianity this fact, "On this Rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Look at the weight, then, of the interest of Christ; it requires an omnipotent King to sustain it. Look at the worth of it. Who can preserve so valuable an interest but an omnipotent reigning Monarch? Look at the connections in which it stands, and at its destination. The church is destined for the highest honors. She must, she will attain that position, and wear those honors as the grand result of the fact that Jesus reigns. He must reign and complete His own mediation. He died to save, and lives in heaven to convey the benefits of His own death. He died to pay the debts of His people, and lives in heaven to receive all whose debts He paid; and hence, if we were saved by His death, we shall be much more saved by His life. O my dear brethren, we have salvation from both the crowns of Jesus; salvation from the thorny crown, and salvation from the golden one. Yes, we have our

hope of heaven from the fact that He was crowned with thorns, and we shall have the heaven we hope for from the fact that He is crowned with glory; salvation comes from the cross and throne.

Let us notice very briefly the results of His reign: "till He hath put all enemies under His feet." Every saved sinner is in a certain sense brought to His feet, but not put beneath them. They lie at His feet in the dust of self-abasement for pardon and forgiveness, and when they are pardoned and forgiven, they are put into His bosom; for this is how He deals with His people; He takes their sins in one hand, and their persons in the other, for He can separate the sinner from his sins, and casts the sin behind His back, and puts the sinner into His bosom. This is how He saves His people. But the enemies put beneath His feet, who are they? The time is coming when popery shall be there. Made by hell, Rome shall be taken and destroyed. The nations of the Continent are shaking off its yoke to a considerable extent, but the monster of iniquity seems to be finding a refuge and a home in this beautiful and blessed country of ours. O that the Lord would open our rulers' eyes and the eyes of the nation generally! The locust army of Jesuits are finding an asylum and home here. Blessed be God, the system is doomed, and Antichrist shall be destroyed, and heaven and earth shall say, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!" Where is she? Underneath the feet of King Jesus. He must reign, till philosophy, mere intellectuality—so far as it opposes His truth—and everything that is worldly and sinful, are put beneath His feet.

Finally, there is death itself, and that was perhaps the leading idea of the Apostle; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Now, when our dear Lord put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He did not annihilate death, but spoiled it and its power, and changed its nature, and altered its position; He took the sting from it, and so changed it, that it is now the believer's road to heaven. King Jesus will demand all death's prey; and then He will take possession of all the territories of death; and when death has disgorged its prey, and its territories are in the hands of Jesus, then Christ will smite death, and hurl it beneath His feet, and the last enemy shall be destroyed; and then shall come the end. And when worlds thus surround the throne of Jesus, and death and hell are overcome, and ransomed millions are entering everlasting perfection and glory, may you and I be there; for

*"How can we bear that piercing thought,
What if our names should be left out,
When Thou for them shalt call "*

May the Lord command a blessing on what we have said, for His own name's sake. Amen.