

GOD'S DWELLING-PLACE,

NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

GOD, by the hand of His servant Moses, redeemed His earthly people Israel out of Egypt, and they sang this song unto the Lord, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord, for *he hath triumphed gloriously* : the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation ; he is my God (and *I will prepare him an habitation**), my father's God, and I will exalt him, etc " (Ex. xv. 1-21). In verse 13, the song continues, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy strength unto *thy holy habitation.*" And again in v. 17, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, *in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.* The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

* I will praise, or glorify Him.

His grace brought them into the land of promise, after a long experience in the wilderness under His government. The kingdom having been eventually established in the hand of His servant David, God allowed his son, Solomon, to build Him *an habitation*. On the way to the land, as well as after they had reached it, His glory dwelt in their midst in the temporary building, called the tabernacle. God was there. But Solomon built Him *a house*. Apart from the wisdom and blessing with which God endowed Moses, and later on Solomon, this would have been impossible. Instrumentally through them, the Lord made Himself a place to dwell in on earth, and thus established the Sanctuary of which His redeemed ones sang.

From the early days of man's history, the Lord came and spake with His saints. But it was not until He had a redeemed people that we have the revelation of His forming a dwelling-place for Himself among them, although we get perhaps an indication of it from the lips of Jacob after his remarkable dream on his journey to Haran, seeking a wife (Gen. xxviii. 16-17).

The *Shecinah* glory, which for a while dwelt in the tabernacle, constructed for the Lord in every detail exactly as He commanded Moses, took up its abode later between the cherubim over the mercy seat upon the ark of the covenant in the holiest of all, in the temple built by Solomon. It

was the manifestation of Jehovah's presence in the midst of His people. No other edifice, from the beginning of this world's history down to the present moment, can be compared for glory and beauty with this exceeding magnificent temple. It was its greatest wonder, the dwelling-place on earth which He, the omnipresent One, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, had chosen and established among His people. Who is *like unto Thee*, O Lord, among the gods (or, the mighty ones), who is *like unto Thee* ?

But, alas, Israel, with all their great privileges, wandered in heart from God, and fell under His chastening hand. The holiness of Him who dwelt in their midst demanded that He should be surrounded with a nation holy not only in name, but in deed and in truth. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5). Holiness becomes those who serve Him, the holy One, in connection therewith. Great was His patience, and many were His warnings. But Israel did not and would not hear. For the glory of His own great Name, God must chastise His stiff-necked and wayward people. They were carried into captivity, their beautiful city being overthrown, and the glorious temple of Jehovah their God destroyed. And God transferred the kingly power into the hands of the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who was

the chief executor of His wrath. Ten of the tribes, led captive into Assyria, are lost among the nations to this day. Judah (including the remainder of Benjamin (2 Kings xxiv.)) was led to Babylon, where the Jews remained seventy years away from the land of Jehovah, and without His temple. They hanged their harps upon the willows, in the midst of a people of strange speech. They could not sing the songs of Zion in a strange land (Ps. cxxxvii. 2).

At the close of seventy years a remnant of God's captive people returned from Babylon to their forsaken land, and in His providential grace, they were allowed to rebuild the altar and temple, and the walls and city of Jerusalem. Interesting and instructive details are given us in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and elsewhere.

It was the descendants of these restored captives who filled the cup of Israel's iniquity to the brim in crucifying their Messiah, Jesus, the Lord of glory, with the consent and aid of the Gentile power, then represented by the Roman empire. Their cup overflowed in the further resistance of the Holy Ghost. Consequently the city was again overthrown, and Herod's new temple, which had succeeded the one built by the returned captives, and which took forty-six years in building, was destroyed. The remaining Jews were scattered among the nations, with "*Loammi*" (not my people) written upon them, a byword, a proverb,

a hissing, and a reproach to this day (2 Chron. vii. 20 ; Hosea i. 9).

Now all these things which were written afore-time were written for our learning and admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come. Consequent upon the rejection and death of Christ, God has revealed *a new thing altogether*—the church. He had *a purpose* in His own heart and mind both before His ways with Israel and before the creation of the world, which he *has now made known*. For some four hundred years after the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, God's glory no longer dwelt upon the earth. In spite of His long patience, Israel persisted in their guilt. Then, before even the execution of divine judgment upon the nation, in the year 70 A. D. and whilst His temple was still standing, Christ, having accomplished redemption, was exalted by God to glory, and the Holy Ghost sent below to form the church, which is His body, and also *an habitation for God* after an entirely *new order*.

On the day of Pentecost one hundred and twenty believers from amongst the guilty nation of Israel at Jerusalem were baptized by the Holy Ghost. Hitherto simply individuals, they became by His presence members of the body of Christ, the living Head in glory, and the habitation of God in the Spirit. Others were added later (Acts iv. 4), and Gentiles were also brought into the

same privilege and blessing, which work has continued to this day.

By this it is evident, that whilst the *moral* character of God's dwelling-place on earth is ever the same, the structure itself has completely changed. He dwelleth no longer in a temple made by hands, but by the gift and operation of the Spirit He is forming *a spiritual temple* (which in its entirety is composed of all true Christians) a spiritual house of spiritual stones, in which each stone partakes of the same moral nature as Christ, who is the rock foundation of the whole building, the One whom Peter confessed as the Son of the living God (Matt. xvi. 16). Commenced on the day of Pentecost, all who compose this wonderful structure are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, *in whom* all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord (Eph. iii. 10). It embraces all Christians from that day until the translation, by divine power, of the heavenly saints (1 Thess. iv. 15-18). All Christians on the earth at any given moment during the absence of the Lord are in Him builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22).

The Spirit proceeds from the ascended Christ, seated at God's right hand, and has taken up His abode in the saints here below. By His presence they are all one *in Him*. Strong emphasis is laid

upon this fact by the apostle in this remarkable passage, "*In whom all the building,*" "*fitly framed together,*" "*groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*" "*In whom ye also,*" "*are builded together*" "*for an habitation of God through (or in) the Spirit.*"

Of old God had said to His people that He would dwell among them, and *be their God* (Ex. xxix. 45-46). And to His saints at Corinth, "*Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, etc.*" (2 Cor. iv. 16).

It is all important to apprehend what the true church (or, assembly) of God really is, in the midst of the imitations and assumptions of Christendom. All who compose it are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. No one else, whatever his pretension, has any part or lot in the matter. One hundred and twenty disciples of Christ were the first to receive the gift of the Spirit. Till that moment individual believers, henceforth they were *one in Christ*. The presence of the one Spirit on the day of Pentecost constituted them one. Other Jews were shortly added, and later on Gentiles, and were thus introduced into the unity which God established on the earth, of which the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Cor. xii. 13, saying, "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one*

body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into *one Spirit*," etc.

On looking further into scripture, we find that the church (or, assembly) of God, thus formed, is viewed in different aspects, viz., as the body of Christ, as the bride of the Lamb, and as the house of God. As the subject immediately before us is God's dwelling-place, we will only briefly glance at the first two.

Having raised Christ from the dead, and exalted Him, God gave Him to be *Head* over all things *to the church*, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. i. 22-23). In its fullest aspect, the body comprises all who receive the Spirit from the day of Pentecost till the translation of the heavenly saints. The church, proceeding from the living Head, Christ in glory, by the gift of the Spirit, is one with Him. On the other hand, all the saints living at any given moment on the earth during the absence of Christ are viewed as His body on earth (1 Cor. xii.). The figure of *the body* of Christ is not employed in scripture after the saints who compose the church are raised or translated to glory. Paul is the only writer who speaks of the body; we find it in four of his epistles (Rom., Cor., Col., Eph.).

The church is also viewed as the bride of Christ. He is the heavenly Bridegroom, and has set His

love upon this company as the bride of His affections, hereafter to share His glory and His throne. "He that hath the bride *is* the bridegroom" (John iii. 29). He loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. v. 27). Hence the church in response to His love should be characterized by true bridal affection, whilst waiting for His return. Shortly after He has claimed her from the world, the scene of her pilgrimage, He will present her to Himself glorious, and she will become the Lamb's wife (Rev. xix.). And not only so, but when according to promise He shall return in glory, He will display her, adorned with His glory, before the eyes of a wondering universe, both to angels and to men. The Spirit, as He leads the bride home to Christ, teaches her to join in the invitation to return. "The Spirit *and* the bride say, Come" (Rev. xxii. 17).

The church is also the house, or dwelling-place of God, and, as such, may be viewed from at least three different points of view : as a building whose architect is the Son of God, and in which believers are viewed *as living stones* ; as a house with which responsibility is connected (Heb. iii.) ; and as a house which is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15). In the future she is viewed as *a*

city (Rev. xxi. 9-27), and as *the tabernacle of God* (Rev. xxi. 3).

The first mention of the assembly as a building came from the lips of the Son of God Himself. Peter, His disciple, having received a revelation from His Father in heaven, confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thereupon Jesus said, "Thou art Peter (a stone), and upon this rock (Himself) I will build *my church*, and the gates of hell (hades) shall not *prevail* against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). He commenced the building on the day of Pentecost, although doubtless the preparation of the material had already begun. From that moment every believer attracted to the Lord, *coming to Him, a living stone*, partakes of the same nature and character, and, with other similar living stones, is built up *a spiritual house* (1 Pet. ii. 5).

In Eph. ii. 20-22, the apostle, treating of this same spiritual building (a passage we have already referred to) says to the saints, "Ye *are built* upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through (or, in) the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). Verse 21 speaks of *all the building*, comprising all saints from Pentecost till claimed for the Lord Himself on His descent into

the air (1 Thess. iv. 15-18); verse 22 of the saints living on the earth at any given moment during that period. The church on earth composed of saints *builded together in the Lord* is an habitation of God through (or, in) the Spirit. For the glory of His own great Name He deigns to dwell in His people, and in His inscrutable wisdom to make them the vessel of His testimony during the present interval. But we must not lose sight of the fact that He is also *omnipresent*. He is the high and lofty One, whose Name is holy, who inhabits eternity (Isa. lvii. 15). And the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him (1 Kings viii. 27). He is infinitely greater than all that He creates.

In Hebrews iii. 1-6 we get a further allusion to this wondrous building, the house of God. It brings before us a remarkable contrast between Christ and Moses. Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant. Christ is Son over God's house to-day.*

Here we would add a word in relation to 1 Cor. iii. 9-23, where the saints are viewed as God's husbandry, God's building, and God's temple. This is a different line of things from those we have been considering. It treats of the responsibility of those who profess to build the truth in souls.

* The saints being viewed here in responsibility, the apostle adds, "*Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence (or boldness) and the rejoicing (or boast) of the hope firm unto the end*" (Heb. iii. 6.)

The apostle has before him the sanctuary or shrine that is the inner part of the temple. He insists here on the holiness of the temple of God, and the great responsibility of those who build in connection therewith. The foundation is Jesus Christ. Paul himself laid it in souls by his doctrine and ministry. And before speaking of his fellow-labourers and their service he forewarns us "that every man's work shall be made manifest, that the day shall declare it, that it shall be revealed by fire, and that the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Then follow three characters of workmen, and the results of their work. The first builds according to God. His work produces in souls that which is according to God. Hence it abides in the day of searching, and he receives a reward. The second is a careless workman whose work is not according to God. It does not produce in souls that which is suited to Him. Hence it is burnt up in the day of testing, and he suffers loss, though he himself (being a subject of grace) shall be saved; but it adds significantly, yet so as by fire (or through (the) fire).

The third is a mere professor. He only defiles the temple of God. His doctrine corrupts instead of preserves souls. Hence he is manifested as a corrupter, and him shall God destroy (or, corrupt). How deeply solemn! May all who read these lines take earnest heed.

Following upon this searching word, the apostle adds, "*Let no man deceive himself.*" "If any man among you *seemeth to be wise* in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." Would that the propagators of the new and infidel theology of the present day would take heed to the solemn warning of Him who cannot lie, and who is strong to execute His word.

In 1 Tim. iii. 15, the house of God is said to be the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of *the truth*, and the apostle gives instruction to his son in the faith, as to how he should behave himself therein. In the second epistle we get the effects of departure from the truth, through the bringing in of error, and forgetfulness of the glory and holiness of the living God. Hence, instead of being able to portray a scene of order, where all is according to God, we find a scene of disorder, with instruction how to act in the midst of it. The apostle is led to use the figure of *a great house*, in which are *not only* vessels of gold and of silver, but also those of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. Then follows the injunction, "If a man therefore purge (or purify, or separate) himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 20-21). It is only as following this clear instruction that a Christian to-day can be well-pleasing to the Lord in the

present condition of things. In purging or cleansing himself from these vessels to dishonour he becomes a vessel sanctified and fit for the Master's use. And in following righteousness, faith, love, peace, walking in practical fellowship with those who are characterized by calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, he is answering to the holy claims of God, and behaving himself rightly as belonging to His house.

When our Lord went up to Jerusalem, he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. The wickedness of men had turned the holy temple of God into a money and cattle mart, etc. He charged them with making His Father's house a house of merchandize and a den of thieves (John ii. 16). In Christendom we get its counterpart. The defection in relation to God and to His house on earth is equally as great. The Spirit of God has forewarned us that the apostate church, under the figure of Babylon the great, will become the habitation of demons, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. xviii. 2).

Let us now seek to gather what are the true characteristics and ordering of the house of God on earth. Just as a man is known by the moral ordering of his house, his family, and his surroundings, so God becomes known in the house where He dwells. His nature is love. He is also light,

the holy One, and His attributes are manifold, grace, mercy, righteousness, etc., etc. Hence we find that He builds a house on earth suited to Himself. He dwells there and fills it. It is the habitation of God in the Spirit. The Spirit dwells in all who compose it, and sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, forming them thus in the divine nature, so that they dwell in love, and hence in Him (1 John iv. 16). The moral atmosphere of God's house is holy love. It is love's home on earth. And once His saints are introduced there it is for ever. In the power of the Spirit it is our privilege to enjoy a deepening sense of the wondrous love of Him who dwells in us, whilst awaiting our introduction into the Father's house and coming kingdom. There love in all its fulness will be our blessed portion for evermore.

Moreover, God who has chosen His heavenly saints, in this day of boundless grace, as His dwelling-place on earth, has made them His children and revealed Himself to them as their Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons (or, the children) of God" (1 John iii. 1). "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John ii. 13). "The Father himself loveth you" (John xvi. 27). And at that day the world shall know that the Father has loved them, as He has loved His Son (John xvii. 23). It is in God's house on earth,

where He, as a tender and loving Father, cherishes, nourishes us as His beloved children, preserving us in His rich grace from the power of Satan, the inroads of sin, and the evil influence of the world.

At the same time there is the love and care of the Son. It is precious to know and enjoy the mutual love of both the Father and the Son. It is the blessed portion of those who keep the commandments and words of the Son. He who replied to Philip's desire, Show us the Father, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," etc. (John xiv. 9), adds a little further on, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him " (John xiv. 21). And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him* " (John xiv. 23). The Spirit of truth also dwells with and in us (John xiv. 17). How great indeed are the privileges and blessings of the children of God in His house, that the three persons of the blessed Trinity should dwell with us ! *It is now our souls' present home.* Soon all His own will be removed by divine power to share the place prepared by the Son in the Father's house above. For not only are we the children of God who are in relationship with Him

as Father, and the objects here of His love and care, but in that the Spirit of His Son dwells in us, we are sons holy and without blame before His face, brought to Him now in blessed nearness, and called according to His purpose before the world was, to enjoy sonship without let in His presence in the home of love and light and holiness to all eternity.

Children in a house need not only love and care, but also training, admonition, education, and discipline. All these are found in the revelation of God's ways in Christianity. Many scriptures bear upon them, but space will not allow us to enter upon much detail. In the Old Testament we get, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6). But we are on higher ground in the New. Fathers are enjoined to bring up their children in *the nurture and admonition* of the Lord (Eph. vi. 4). Each needs to be disciplined and admonished. There are babes, young men, and fathers in the family of God, and it is only by the discipline and admonition of the Lord that there will be spiritual growth and progress in the knowledge of Himself. Outside the *true* house of God, whilst professing to be of it, there is a sea of laxity and looseness of all kinds in relation to Him and His truth. "*Holiness* becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5). Hence the exhortation, "Be ye holy, for I

am holy" (1 Pet. i. 16). Naturally opposed through the fall and the mastery of Satan and sin to everything of the kind, it is only by exercise under the faithful chastening of love by the Father of Spirits, subjection unto Him, and diligence in divine things, that we can be partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii. 9-10). The children of God pass through the school of God. He deals with us in His own blessed way, working in us by His Spirit, applying His word to our hearts and minds, bringing us into subjection to the Lord. Christ is thus formed in us morally, that we may be characterized by His Spirit, and that we may reflect and manifest Him in all our ways. Angels learn the manifold wisdom of God through the assembly (Eph. iii. 9, 10) and should be able to read Christ in us.

Besides this, there is the maintenance of the truth for the glory of His great Name. The house of God, as we have seen, is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of *the truth* (1 Tim. iii. 15). Hence the apostle, whilst speaking of the ruin and confusion which should come to pass through the power of Satan and the will of man, presses upon Timothy the importance of *the truth* (2 Tim. ii. 18, 25; iii. 7, 8; iv. 4). God would have all to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of *the truth*. In His house the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is enjoyed, and the truth maintained (2 Tim. i. 9; ii. 10). By the maintenance of the

truth (for the glory of Christ) the saints are delivered and preserved from the trammels and shackles of Christendom (2 Tim. ii. 15-22). The truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). God's house is the home of love on earth, where His children, delivered from the dominion of Satan, sin, the schoolmastery of the law, and death, enjoy life and liberty in the light of His holy presence.

Christ, who is over God's house Son, is also Priest, and has obtained a more excellent ministry than that which was exercised by the high priests of Judaism (Heb. viii. 6). His priesthood is towards God, and in relation to His people. It is after the order of Melchisedek, and unchangeable (Heb. vii. 21-24). Having offered Himself as the great antitype of all the sacrifices and offerings which went before. He lives for ever in God's presence, a high Priest of the good things to come (Heb. ix. 11). Such a high Priest *became* His people, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Heb. viii. 26). He is a Minister of the sanctuary (or holy places), and of the true tabernacle, which *the Lord pitched*, and *not man*. In the old economy the sons of Aaron were associated with him in the priestly service. Christians now occupy this privileged position. But being compassed about with infirmities, we need first to find our resource in Him who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was in all points tried like as

we are, yet without sin (Heb. iv. 15). Sustained by His priestly intercession, and knowing the value of His precious blood, we can avail ourselves not only of the privilege of coming boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. iv. 16), but also that of boldly entering into the holiest of all in the sanctuary of God. There was the shrine in the midst of the temple of God of old, and the holy shrine of His presence may be known in His house to-day. Christ is there, our great High Priest, bearing our names deeply graven upon His heart of perfect love before God, His Father and ours. There He ministers in the midst of His loved ones, and He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. To His brethren, He declares His Father's Name, and indites the song of praise in their hearts to Him, etc.

Christ, the Son, our great Priest, is also Lord. And His saints, having been called by a faithful God unto His fellowship (1 Cor. i. 9), and to the fellowship of His death, etc. (1 Cor. x.) are privileged to remember Him in the present hour of His absence; and, in participating in the Lord's supper, to announce that same death till He come (1 Cor. xi.). And we cannot too studiously avoid provoking Him to jealousy by the admission of unqualified persons to partake thereof. All fellowship to be acceptable to God must be holy; for He that has called us to it is holy (1 Pet. i. 15, 16).

Knowing the love and grace of God towards all men, it is our privilege in His house to act upon the words of the Apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy, " I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, *be made for all men* ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth " (I Tim. ii. 1-4).

In I Peter ii., on a somewhat different line, the same privileged company, drawn to Him, the living stone, and in the enjoyment of salvation on the other side of death, is viewed as a holy priesthood set apart to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And not only so, but also as a royal priesthood. As a royal Priest, the true Melchisedek, the Son of God will come forth ere long and sit upon His throne, the whole universe benefiting from the infinite value of His death, His glory filling the entire scene brought under the influence of His beneficent sway. But ere that day of glory, the whole company of His people, as associated with Him, are called to enter upon their functions as priests ; not only to draw near to God but to shew forth (exhibit) His praises (or virtues, or moral excellencies) which first shone to perfection in Christ on earth. They have

the fourfold character of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, having been called by Him out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The priests of old were of the tribe of Levi; both priests and Levites were set apart to serve Jehovah their God, though the character of their service was different. In the house of God to-day, Christians are called to serve both after a priestly and also a Levitical order. But they are functions that we shall only render aright as we enter upon and enjoy the relationship and privilege of sons. As priests and sons we are privileged to serve God in the sanctuary in association with our great High Priest, and to worship God the Father and the Son in the power of the Spirit. In our Levitical character, we are privileged to share, under the Lord's guidance, in the ordering of the household of God, in service towards His people, and in bearing glad tidings of peace and good things towards all in this day of grace. Schooled, equipped, and sent of Him, it is our privilege to go forth to invite all in His Name to come and partake of the riches of His grace, the fatness of His house, and the river of His pleasure.

And further, we are responsible to glorify the Lord in all the relationships and circumstances of our ordinary life here below. This also should be carried out under the influence of the truth that we are sons and priests in God's house.

The house of God entrusted to the hand of men should have been the moral reflection of Himself in this world. But, alas, man always fails in everything committed to him. God's work has been perfect throughout, and when completed, His church will be removed by divine power to adorn the heavenly sphere He has purposed for it. But man's work has been very imperfect. Hence, instead of a spiritual edifice reflecting Christ morally in its every part, we find many of the true saints of God mixed up on all sides with a vast profession. This is distinctly fore-shown by the Holy Ghost as that which would happen. In 2 Tim. ii. (to which we have already referred) we get the clearest instruction how we are to act so as to please Him in the midst of the prevailing wreck and confusion. Divine principles never alter, and although we are not called to reconstruct that which is in ruins, we are privileged to hold fast those divine principles which remain intact. In bowing to His word, in being subject to the Lordship of Christ, and in departing from iniquity, and pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, we have, and shall continue to have, His approval and support, till the close of the church's sojourn here below (2 Tim. ii. 21-22). That which is set forth *in Christ Jesus* is secured for us now as ever, whatever the power of Satan and the will of men may work in opposition to God.

Thus far we have treated of God's house on earth during the interval of Christ's absence in glory. We cannot leave the subject without bringing before our readers somewhat more concerning the future destiny of His assembly. We have already referred to the assembly as the body and bride of Christ, and, in connection with the latter, we have spoken of her hope, and of the marriage of the Lamb when He shall present her to Himself glorious, etc. But more than this, the church will be displayed in the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom, as the holy city Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 9-11). John, in spirit on the mountain top, when shown to him by an angel, sees her descending out of heaven from God, and *having the glory of God*; her light (or brightness, or shining) like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

The glory of God dwelt first in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards in the temple at Jerusalem, retreating from the earth at the destruction of the city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar. That glory was later displayed morally in Christ. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and *we beheld his glory*, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). But Israel and the world refused Christ and cast Him out. The moral glory that shone in the Son incarnate was too great for them. Having returned through death,

resurrection, and ascension to the glory of God, the Holy Ghost descended, and His presence formed the church. Every whit of God's habitation should have morally reflected His glory. But though this witness has failed, God has not failed, and will make all good in the coming kingdom. He will head up all things in Christ in heaven and on earth (Eph. i. 10). The holy city Jerusalem, the church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, will be the vessel of the glory of God, and the Lamb shall be the lamp thereof (Rev. xxi. 11, 23). The earthly temple,* as foretold and described in Ezekiel, shall be rebuilt in the holy land, by Him whose Name is called the Branch, and the Shecinah glory, last seen retreating by the way of the Mount of Olives, shall return (Ezek. xliii. 1-4). "Behold the glory of the Lord filled the house" (Ezek. xliii. 5). Moreover, the knowledge of the Lord, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14).

The Lord, in that day, shall reign gloriously with His heavenly saints over the earth; and Israel, restored and blessed, shall be at the head of the nations, blossoming, budding, and filling

* Another material temple, rebuilt, probably by the Jews in unbelief, is seen in 2 Thess. ii. 4, and it is therein that the anti-christ, Israel's false messiah, exalts himself. This building will doubtless be destroyed at the time of the appearing of the Lord.

the world with fruit ; the nations shall go up to Jerusalem (then restored and rebuilt), the most wonderful city the world has ever seen (Ps. xlvi.), to worship the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. xiv. 16). They shall walk in the light of the holy city above (Rev. xxi. 24). The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto it (v. 24). And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations unto it also (v. 26).

Furthermore, Christ, having reigned a thousand years, shall at the end of time give up the kingdom to the Father, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and God shall be all in all (Rev. xxi. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 28). The holy city, *new Jerusalem*, will come down from God out of heaven (her character heavenly and her source divine), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The thousand years' reign with Christ will have in no way deteriorated her freshness and beauty. She will still be clothed with the adorning of her bridal day.

And the prophet heard *a great voice* out of heaven, saying, "Behold, *the tabernacle* of God is with men, and *he will dwell* with them, and they shall be his people, and *God himself* shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. xxi. 3). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain :

for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4).

It is clear from the above that the assembly which is now the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit and the vessel of His testimony on the earth, and which will be displayed as the holy city, the vessel of God's glory, and the Lamb its lamp, in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, will be the tabernacle or dwelling-place of God in eternity. Sin having been finally put away, and Satan together with death and hades cast into the lake of fire, every moral distance between God and men, and heaven and the earth, will have been removed. The dwelling-place of God will be *with men*. The church, the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, having come down from the sphere of her origin, will enjoy her portion as the tabernacle of God *with men*. He will dwell *with them*. *They* shall be His people (all distinction between Israel and the nations having ceased). God Himself shall be *with them, their God*. Every trace of the fall will have been removed for ever. To eternity (the age of ages) the assembly will enjoy the privilege of being God's dwelling-place *with men*. In that day the One who sits upon the throne will make all things new. *These words are true and faithful* (Rev. xxi. 5).

In view of that glorious and never-ending day, when God shall be all-in-all, when righteousness shall dwell, and the whole scene will be in perfect

harmony with God Himself, we get His precious promise in *v.* 7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all (or, these) things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. xxi. 7). What a precious word of encouragement for the believer to-day! May each be exercised that he may be found faithful and fruitful in relation to God. May each seek to maintain the holiness of His house and the welfare of His saints. May each overcome (or, get the victory) in this day of evil, in view of the enjoyment of the blest relationship of His son in the endless day of righteousness and glory.
