

# **LIBERATION OF THE WITNESSES**

## **A SERMON**

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**“They ascended up to heaven in a cloud.” Revelation 11:12**

YOU observe that these witnesses are represented in their various circumstances at the time of the sounding of the trumpets. The book with seven seals is nothing else but the Old Testament, and that the seven trumpets are nothing else but Old Testament predictions of the judgment that the Lord would bring upon man: and perhaps the seven trumpets may have some reflex allusion to the seven trumpets by which the walls of Jericho were thrown down. And it was customary in the Old Testament age, to speak of the solemn warning declarations of God’s judgment as trumpets: hence, said one, “You have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.” The vials are nothing else but the same things in another position: and all three, the sealed book, the trumpets, and the vials, will stand in this way, First, the sealed book, to denote that the judgments and the mysteries of God are concealed. Second, there are the trumpets to sound out those judgments to the warning of sinners, to the awakening of saints, that they being thus warned and awakened by the power of God, may fly from the wrath to come. And then, third, there are the vials, which are expressive of the execution of those judgments. Thus, you have, first, their concealment; second, you have their sounding abroad; and third, in the vials, you have their execution. And that, although these seals, and trumpets, and vials are spoken, consecutively, and of course the seals were consecutive in the manifestation of one after the other to John, and the trumpets were also successive in their sounding, and the vials are successive in their declarative execution, but while these things appear to follow in regular succession, one after the other, they are, in reality, the whole of them, the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, all of them, more or less simultaneous, all synchronical. And we can look into the world, and into the church, and we can see hitherto, the fulfillment, more or less, of them all. These trumpets, therefore, I say are nothing else but Old Testament predictions of the judgments of God. And no one I am sure, can be at a loss to know where to look for the past fulfillment of these judgments. And the plagues, and pestilence, and wars that have taken place, I am sure that these solemn judgments have been so far, as the ages have gone on, fulfilled. And you will find that all these trumpets have their limits, that they could not destroy everything, but only some things; and so all the judgments of God in this world are discriminating, because he has a people in the world delivered from these judgments, and there never will be such a thing as a universal sweep of judgment, while the world shall last, because while the world shall last the Lord has a people in the world, and for their sakes, he spares even

the world itself. Then there shall be a universal judgment pertaining to these that are lost, they must all be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; while in contrast to this, his people shall be received into everlasting glory. It is not my intention to enter broadly into these matters, but I do feel anxious that you should understand that the sealed book is nothing else but the Old Testament, and that the trumpets are nothing else but the predictions of the Old Testament. You have ample proof of this in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, (the preceding chapter to where our text is,) when the seventh angel shall sound, it is said, "the mystery of God shall be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets." Now, I would not in one sermon, nor in ten sermons, bring forward the prophets and the testimony that they bear relative to the completion of God's judgments, but that reference in connection with the seventh trumpet is to the prophets, is a proof that these seven trumpets, like the vials, are nothing else but Old Testament predictions, which are here arranged in order, and shall be carried out by the power of God. And you will not feel to observe, friends, that each seven has its climax. Hence, the seventh seal brings us up into fellowship with Christ, the Intercessor. When the seventh seal is opened, then appears the golden altar, that is what we want to see; so that we have, by the sacrificial altar, gained access to the golden altar of intercession, there is the Savior in the holy of holies, mingling much incense with the prayers of the saints: so, the seventh seal brings us up into access to God. And then the seven trumpets also: you will find that when the seventh trumpet sounded, the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of our God and of Christ. Hence, in connection with our text, "One woe is past, and behold, the other comes quickly;" that is, declaratively: not comes quickly executively, but comes quickly declaratively. I could easily prove, and shall, no doubt, at some future time, if spared, that these things, in their operation, go on synchronically; and do feel a desire that you might be able a little more clearly to understand this book of Revelation, and read there unto the profit of your souls, and to the glory of God. Now this book, we must not forget, has a past, present, and future. Now, when did the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ? When Christ rose from the dead! Christ then gave up the one nation, he gave up the Jewish nation, and all the kingdoms of this world then became his subserviently, he took from among them a people that were given unto him: and the kingdoms of this world have continued to belong to the Savior ever since the sounding of the seventh angel, ever since that prediction was declared, there is the prediction, that is the climax of that department, that Christ should be uncontrolled, that he should have the range of all the nations of the earth. And we hope the time will come, when England will not be the only favored nation; we hope the time will come, when all the nations of the earth shall receive the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Then it was the nations of the earth became the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ subserviently: they have been his ever since, they are his now, and will be his down to the end of time. As to that carnal notion of the literal millennium, that even some good men have advocated, I hope that it will soon die out, it is held now chiefly by duty faith people, and people that like something that pleases the senses of their hearers; ministers that well know, that unless they hold fast the sensuous feelings of their hearers, they will have no hearers; their religion is a mere sensuous religion, it appeals to the senses and sympathies and I may say, to the depravities of human nature, and builds men up in enmity against the sovereignty of God, the spirituality of his kingdom, the dignity of the gospel and the freedom that the saints have in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now after these few remarks we have still to proceed with our subject this morning, *the ascension of these witnesses*. And I think that I should have set before you the several senses in which they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, but I shall not reach that point this morning, suffice it to say,

that heaven here spoken of we must understand to mean not heaven ultimately; or if we do understand it in that sense, we must not understand it in that sense only; we must be careful not to confine a scripture merely to one idea; so that their ascending up into heaven here must be understood in the same sense that heaven in the next chapter is to be understood. For instance, in the next chapter you find the church they are spoken of as in heaven, and you find a great red dragon in heaven, now that cannot mean heaven literally, but it means the heavenly dispensation, the gospel dispensation. And this is what you find here that these witnesses, who had been deprived of their outward privileges, that they rose from the dead, that they ascended into their heavenly privileges, they ascended into these heavenly things, and openly enjoyed what before they had been denied the enjoyment of. Now they could not thus ascend if they had not been denied the enjoyment of. Now they could not thus ascend if they had not been liberated. It is then this one idea that will take up our time this morning *liberation*; that they were liberated. Let us see as we go along what we know of that liberation that demonstrates that we are the citizens of heaven, that we are on our way to everlasting glory. And I shall get the explanation of this liberation from the next chapter, and there are two or three reasons why I do so, first, because in the next chapter there is a variety of ways set forth in which the Lord delivers his people, and I have no doubt as we go along many of you will be able to recognize the dealings of the Lord with you in some of that variety of ways in which he delivers us, as set before us in the next chapter. Another reason why I do so is because there is in that chapter a solemn word to those that know not God; and I wish to say a word in every sermon, if the Lord will give me a word to say, to those of you that know not the Lord, as well as to those of you that you know the Lord. I do not wish to let anyone go without as it were holding a glass to every man's face, because those that know not the Lord are where we ourselves once were, and I am sure my feelings would not be right, nor yours either, if we had not in our hearts grace by which to pray for the ingathering of others as well as to pray for our personal welfare, and the prosperity and well-being of those whom the Lord has brought to know him.

First. First then, *this liberation or freedom is by the preservation of Jesus Christ for them*. This may sound strange to you, but is not strange to the Scriptures, for if the Lord do not preserve Jesus Christ to us then we cannot be liberated. He is our freedom, he is our life from death, our light from darkness, our rest from weariness, our release from sin, and guilt, and woe, our release from condemnation; and if the Lord preserve not this Jesus Christ unto us, then we cannot be liberated. But before I enter upon that subject let me definitely set before you the kind of Jesus Christ that God's Christ is, and if you are clear upon that, then you will be able to follow me with ease through the several parts I am about to bring before you. There is then a beautiful correspondence between the Old Testament and the New as to the kind of Jesus Christ that the Christ of God is. Take Isaiah: after Isaiah has set the Savior before us in his infancy, and in his Sonship, and in his investiture, as being invested with the government, "the government shall be upon his shoulder", and in his divinity, as the Mighty God; and in his paternity, as the Everlasting Father; then Isaiah gives us to understand the kind of Christ this is by the kind of kingdom that belongs to him; "of the increase of his government, and of peace, there shall be no end, to order and establish it, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom." So, the throne is to be in peace, and the kingdom is to be in peace: "to establish it with justice and judgment henceforth and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this." You see, then, friends, the complexity of Christ, here, and you will see also the certainty of his kingdom: there is no uncertainty. Then if you come to the New Testament take another scripture in sweet accordance with that, I think we shall get a pretty clear idea of what this kingdom of Christ is, of what this heaven is, and of what Christ is: now in the New Testament we

are told, "You shall call his name Jesus, and he shall be great, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his Father David;" that is the antitypical throne of David: "and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." I am sure when we thus look at the kind of Christ he is, the certainty of his government, the certainty of his kingdom, my conclusion is that it is not a Roman Catholic Christ, nor is it a Wesleyan Christ, nor is it a duty faith Christ; but as the words are fashionable I might as well use them, it is it is a thorough hyper-Calvinist Christ; it is a Christ unconnected with any uncertainty whatsoever, the Child is born, the Son given, all goes upon the ground of eternal certainty. Now this is the Jesus Christ that the church in times of tribulation has travailed in birth with and has longed to bring him forth in the public ministry of the word. Satan's labor ever has been to prevent this true Christ of God, in this perfection of his work and certainty of his kingdom, Satan has ever aimed to prevent such a Jesus Christ as this becoming brought forth. Satan cares nothing for a Roman Catholic Christ; he cares nothing for a duty faith Christ; he cares nothing for free will Jesus Christ; he cares nothing for a shilly-shally Jesus Christ. Why, only imagine a gospel minister, a professed gospel minister, setting forth Immanuel, God Almighty, setting forth Christ as sitting on his throne, and weeping, and crying, and fretting, and grieving because men will not come to him. Why, really, if they were preaching up some earthly infant king, and he was sitting on his throne and grieving and crying because he could not get his own way, there would be some correspondence between what they say in the character of the person whom they speak. But to speak of Jesus Christ in such a manner as that, is delusion all over! He has power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as are given unto him; "other sheep I have which are not of this fold;" shall I sit, and weep, and fret, and grieve, and say, I wish they would come, and they will not come? Oh no; he says, "I must bring them and there shall be onefold, and one shepherd:" there is no uncertainty about the matter. Now then the church labored to bring forth this kingdom, to set forth his kingdom, and to set forth such a Jesus Christ as this. "And the dragon", that is an organized tyrannical power, whether pagan, or anything else, it does not matter what it is, "stood before her to devour this child." Ah, this is that Jesus Christ that will reign, and must reign; this is that Jesus Christ, says Satan, whom God has lodged all the good pleasure of his will, and that that good pleasure of the will of God shall prosper in the hands of this Holy Child; and therefore, Satan stands before the woman to devour this child. And, oh! How hard is he at it now, in all sorts of shapes, to degrade, lower, reproach, revile, slander, and bring into disrepute the real work of Christ, the real kingdom of Christ, and the real people of God.

Now then, this child, not literally, but mystically, was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Here is the preservation. The meaning is, that the church did from time to time, the church in one age travailed in birth to bring him forth, and then in another age of tribulation travailed in birth to bring him forth, and he is brought forth; and being caught up to God and his throne means, for so I take it, God's care of the gospel. It is it not a miracle? If you look at what the Bible itself, the pure Bible, has come through, is it not wonderful that the Bible has come out of the Jewish world, and out of the pagan world, and out of the Popish world, so pure as it is? Is it not wonderful that it has not been pulled all to pieces, and has not been so altered, and scriptures so turned upside down and torn to pieces that we should hardly know which was pure in which was not? But the Lord would not permit this, and I think the hand of the Lord in preserving the holy Scriptures to us pure, is a wonderful thing. Men have labored to, they wrote, as you know, in the dark ages many false gospels, and hence the books called the Apocrypha ought to be called the Hypocrisy, except that of the Maccabees, a little history in it, and so on. So that the Lord has preserved the scriptures, the

holy child Jesus, those scriptures that represent him, as I take it, that they are caught up to his throne. And as for Popery destroying the Bible now; why, the Bible is in too many languages now for it ever to be destroyed: the lamp of truth is held up so high to illuminate the nations, and Satan has never been able to put this light under a bushel again, no; bless the Lord, he has preserved then the scriptures unto us. Now, if Jesus Christ were not preserved unto us as set forth in the scriptures, where would be our liberation? When a minister whose head has gone before his heart, who has been preaching with a Calvinistic head, and an Arminian heart, but it so happens he has been among some honest people, and he dares not bring out the Arminianism in his heart; by-and-bye a rich man or two gets into his congregation, bribe him, become liberal to him, and give him perhaps more money in private than a hundred poor people can do, in order to make him more moderate; till out comes the Arminianism of his heart, under the hypo-critical pretension of being more practical; he has seen the necessity of being more practical. Now this man goes away, and becomes a true legalist, and the result is that the people, if they stay with him, are brought into bondage, and so rather than stay with him they will leave the chapel, and have a room in a neighbor's house, or they will meet in a barn or a stable; they will leave the place, and meet, if it is only half a dozen of them, where they can have the true Christ of God, the true grace of God, the true gospel of God, and the true mercy of God, and so enjoy the truth. Well then, there are apostatizing ministers and apostatizing professors; men that go out from us because they are not of us; for had they been of us they doubtless would have stayed with us; there shall be some of this kind; what of that? Shall that make the faith of God's elect without effect? No; the Lord will find a way to cause the manna of his truth to reach his hungry poor: he will bring them to the Rock from whence flows the living water: he will bring them under the free grace vine, the free grace fig tree, and it shall be well with them. Well now, when the gospel was thus preserved, what did the church do? She saw what the dragon was about; and the church then fled into wilderness, where she has a place prepared, God prepared her a place where she is to be nourished. This wilderness is the way to the promised land. See how one thing stands connected with another. If you are longing after Jesus Christ, and you see that God preserves his promises, and that in those promises Jesus Christ is contained, and that in preserving these Holy Scriptures he preserved Jesus Christ, and in that you are one with those scriptures, you are as safe in reality as Jesus Christ himself is safe as those scriptures themselves: the heavens and the earth shall pass away and come to nothing, but you can never pass away or come to nothing; your life is eternal. So, then the church fled into the wilderness from Egypt on her way to the promised land. So, my hearer, if we know the value of Jesus Christ, if we feel our need of that liberation which he alone can give, then we shall be swerved from the world, we shall be on our way to the promised land; it will be a wilderness path, we shall not have very many with us, it will be solitary; but still our faces will be toward the promised land, towards the land flowing with milk and honey, toward the pleasant land, toward that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. Now this is one way in which the Lord delivers us. We sometimes get into a sad state of mind; so, wrapped up in the world, so buried in the world, so worldly minded, this conversion of the soul is a trifle with you, fellowship with God seems gone, everything dark and dead; by-and-by, when the Lord again is pleased to quicken your pace, then you will fly away from the world and out of self and everything: oh! How sweet those seasons are, when we can fly from self and from the world and be on our way to the promised land; for that is one of the ways in which the Lord delivers us.

Another way in which he delivers us, is enabling us to set the atonement of Christ over against our sins, and to set the testimony of truth over against falsehood, and to set superior love to God over

against the love of the flesh. Hence you read that they which were in heaven, Michael and his angels fought, and the dragon and his angels fought. By Michael we are to understand of course, the Angel of the Covenant, Jesus Christ, he fought as the Angel of the Covenant. Michael signifies "the likeness of God." There stood Christ on new covenant ground, advocating covenant order, covenant privileges, covenant certainties, and covenant provision; and there stood his angels with him, that is, his ministers, advocating the same things. Ah, says Satan and his agents, that is just what I hate; says Satan, if I could but get rid of that Messenger of the Covenant, and get rid of that new covenant, and get rid of these certainties, then I should do. So, Satan and his ministers fought against this Messenger, this Angel, against this new covenant. Is it not so in the day in which we live? Where is the conflict now between Satan and the church? Why it lies there. That a man be brought into the new covenant, let them stand there on the rock, as on the Parasitical ground, as on the height of Zion; let him stand there, and defy sin, and Satan, and the world, and life, and death, and rejoice in the eternal certainty of eternal conquest, Satan and his agents will rise the cry, "Antinomianism, Antinomianism." Never mind their cry: if you are one of the Messengers of the Covenant and one with the covenant, stand fast. Now the Dragon in his angels prevailed not, of course not, and they were cast out of this heavenly dispensation: they were cast down: that is, their doctrines were cast down, their ceremonies and systems were cast down; and the saints rejoiced that now is come the kingdom and the strength of our God. And how did they thus overcome? Now notice: "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Ah, says Satan, look at this sin, look at that, look at the other; you had better give way, you had better give up belonging to that sect everywhere spoken against, you had better become one of us. And what did men of God do then? What men of God will do now; they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb: that is, let Satan accuse where he may, yet what is the answer, Ah, "The blood of the Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." We have no idea of this enmity in our day; as far as it shows itself in public it shows itself in a refined form, but it was not so 500 years ago; in the time of Wickliffe, for instance, you have no idea some of you of the light in which the people of God were viewed in that day. There is a writer speaking of what were called the Lollards, those who were on the side of God's truth; that writer, pointed out how bad the character of these high doctrine people was, says, (you will know when I repeat the words how they have been applied in another way) "If all the earth were parchment and the oceans were ink, and every twig a pen, and every man a scribe, even then the wickedness of these dreadful people could not be written." What would you think of that now? Suppose they talked like that of us now, you would be frightened, some of you featherbed Christians, chimney corner sailors. But that did not move the people of God, they knew what their wickedness consisted of in the eyes of their enemies, it consisted in rejecting error, and receiving the truth as it is in Jesus.

Bat why I speak in this way? Why take I a page or a paragraph out of modern history, comparatively modern? Why go I not to the Holy Scriptures? why go I not to our heavenly Master? What was his crime? His holding fast the truth, in contrast to the world's falsehood. And what was his reward from the world? You know what his reward was, you know what their language was; he was reviled, reproached, and hated, but by his purity, by his perfection, he overcame the whole, rose triumphant from the dead, and left them all behind. We cannot overcome by our personal purity, our personal perfection, or righteousness; we cannot overcome in our own persons as he did in his, we must overcome by his blood, for his victory was not for himself, but for us; and so, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. My hearer, let me say, if I am speaking to any poor tried believer this morning, if you set your sins above the Savior's atonement, why, you cannot

commit a greater sin that I know of than that one sin of setting your sins above his atonement, and making out that you have done more sin and are a greater sinner than his atonement can take away. God deliver you from that and bring you into a spirit not of presumption, God forbid, but a spirit of real humility before him, that you may creep as it were humbly and earnestly to this Rock of Ages, pleading in all earnestness that infinitely precious blood that never failed yet and never can.

But there is the word of their testimony. They held fast the word of the testimony against Satan's falsehood. Here I stand, I came to this point; here your soul shall live; "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." There I stand, you may bring what doctrines you like, I have no room for them. The mercy is sure as pertaining to God the Father, sure as it pertains to Christ, sure as it pertains to the Holy Spirit, sure as to us, there is no uncertainty about it. But then notice something else, "they loved not their lives unto death." What in ages gone by have the people of God undergone. It was no mere theory. Can we say that we love this Jesus Christ, this new covenant truth? Can I say that God preserving me I would rather lose my liberty and my life today, shed the last drop of my blood, then give up one particle of this blessed truth? I do not ask you to say what you will do, because some good men have temporarily failed, in order that they might learn their weakness, and rely less upon their own resolutions, and more upon the power of God. If you have the atonement, but not the truth, then you will be a lover of falsehood; and if you have the atonement in theory, and even the truth in theory, yet if the Lord has not your hearts; if you are not a son, but only a servant, then you will not overcome. You must have these three things. The Lord says to everyone if his sons, "My son, give me your heart." Has he said that to you, my hearer? Has the truth ever won your affection, and has it kept it? Ah, if so, then you are one of God's witnesses; you are entering now into heavenly places with Christ Jesus; and by-and-by, when the trumpet sounds when the mighty shout of unnumbered millions shall rend of all the skies, you shall ascend, be enthroned with Jesus, there to dwell forever.

But we have not done yet. It is said further, "Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you; having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time." I cannot suppose you all know the Lord; here are young people, here are aged people that do not know the Lord; you are an inhibitor of the earth, your all is on earth, you have no hope for heaven, no love for Christ. He who makes up his entire portion in this world, what is he likened unto? The man that lies upon the top of a mask, or that lies down in the midst of the sea. Then, Satan has come down unto you. I will tell you what he is come to you for; and God may lay the matter home to your heart, he is come to you to deceive you, and to make you more dead than you are. He is afraid that you will be attracted by Jesus Christ; he is afraid that you will begin to think, young as you are you are none too young to die, young as you are, you are none too young to need salvation. Woe unto you, living and dying in that state. Oh, how hard Satan works; if we, I was going to say were favored to work half as hard for the furtherance of our welfare as Satan does to maintain his kingdom, and deceive immortal souls, we should be workers indeed. May the Lord open your eyes

And therefore, if you ask yourself, what is the reason I am not concerned about my soul, what is the reason I am not drawn to Jesus Christ, what is the reason I do not pray, what is the reason I am content to live without Christ and without God in the world? the answer must be, Ah, I am dead in sin, and Satan has me fast; Satan hides himself, and he knows what my temperament is, what my disposition is, and he suits his delusion to my taste, and so I am on good terms with myself; I am

fast asleep in the scorpion folds of hell, and there is nothing hanging over my head but the curses and woes of God's eternal truth. Ah then, my hearer see the mighty difference between the man who feels his need of Christ and the man who does not feel his need of Christ; the man who is brought to receive Christ, and the man who is not brought to receive Christ; oh, the mighty difference. But how little, I had almost said how insignificant, my hearer, is the difference between you now, that know not the Lord, and those that know the Lord, in comparison of that infinite and eternal difference which awaits the two opposite characters; the one to sink to rise no more, the other to rise to sink no more. Ah, what an infinite mercy to be brought, then, into the spirit of grace and supplication, and to be made a humble and an earnest seeker after that mercy which alone can save us. It is, therefore, a solemn word to those that know not the Lord; woe unto you, for Satan is come down unto you, he knows he has but a short time, if he can but deceive you a little while, he knows that a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, a little more folding the hands to sleep, and you awake up in that world where hope or mercy can never come.

But passing on a little further with this, after Satan was thus cast out, and after he went to busy himself to carry on the delusion of immortal souls, he again persecutes the woman, and the woman has a second flight into the wilderness. In the 6th verse of this chapter, she merely goes into the wilderness; but in the 14th verse, when Satan persecutes her again, then in her second flight there are two wings like the wings of a great eagle given her; and she flew off with majesty. Well, say you, why did she not fly off with more majesty before? Did not know where to fly to, not so well, but now she is made so well acquainted with the atonement of Christ and the word of his testimony, and her affections so rightly set, she has the whole range of gospel liberty, she can fly now as high, and as broad, and as fast as you like. Ah, my hearer, what is your experience? Some of you have not got to it yet, perhaps but you that have been brought into the path of life, you that do love a Savior's name, the enemy will come and persuade you by-and-by, and you will get very low, and then the Lord will fulfill his promise to you, "they shall mount up with wings as eagles;" you shall go on in the glorious liberty of the gospel; you will feel I am as safe as God himself; his throne must be overturned, his arm must be withered, his eyes grow dim, and his ears grow heavy, before I can be in danger.

What does Satan do now? Why, he casts out of his mouth a flood; but the earth helped the woman and swallowed up the flood that the Dragon cast out. I must keep that till next Sunday morning, when I will give you instances from the word of God, where the earth helped the woman.