

GOSPEL GOVERNMENT

A SERMON

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“We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and were, and are to come; because you have taken, to you your great power, and have reigned.” Revelation 11:17

THAT part of the gospel that sets forth the completeness of the work of Christ is called the seventh trumpet, being the declaration of that completeness, that perfection that is in Christ. And when this trumpet began to sound, then commenced the Savior's universal power, then commenced what is here said, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” Hitherto the gospel had been narrowed, chiefly to one kingdom, but now the Savior acquires universal power over all flesh, so that all nations came into his hands, and out of those all nations he takes all those that were given unto him, “Giving eternal life to as many as you have given him;” and this same Lord Jesus Christ shall reign for ever and ever. And of this universal power the elders approved and rejoiced in the display thereof; the people of God all rejoiced in this extension of the gospel. And yet it very much offended Satan, as though Satan should say, Why, you have been content hitherto to let the gospel be in one kingdom, why extend it? why do all this? And so that extension of the gospel caused the nations to be angry; “and the nations were angry,” which, as you are aware, they were. The Jewish tribes were angry and crucified the Savior and the apostles; and the Roman nations were angry, and set up, as you know, persecution after persecution. “And your wrath is come,” and so the judgments of God fell upon Babylon, mystic Babylon, upon the enemies of the truth, “And the time of the dead, that they should be judged;” the time here, not the time they should be raised up, but the time they should be judged. There was a certain judgment awaiting the dead Jewish church, and the time of that judgment arrived. “And that you should give reward unto your servants the prophets.” This does not refer to the final reward of the prophets, and of the saints, and of them that fear God. No; this refers to that present reward which the prophets had in escaping the destruction of Jerusalem, and which the saints had, and which all those that feared the Lord had, they escaped the judgments which fell upon the others, that is the present reward.

We have, then, in the first place, *the omnipotence of our God*. We have, in the second place, *his eternal sameness*, “which are, and were, and are to come.” We have, in the third place, *his rightful government*, “you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned.” And then, fourth, *the gratitude which the knowledge of this must inspire*, “we give you thanks.”

First, then, a word upon the *omnipotence of our God*. But I would forewarn you that I am going to speak of this omnipotence, not in creation, nor in the law sense, nor in the general sense, but in the gospel sense. We want this morning to make use of this glorious perfection of the blessed God in its gospel aspect, as associated with the gospel. First, when a sinner is led into a knowledge of the truth, and led to receive God’s sworn covenant, a covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, that receiving of the covenant, and finding in it everything you can need, is so offensive to the adversary that you will need the Lord, in the almightiness of his power, to sustain you, and to enable you to hold that covenant fast. I now allude in these remarks to the 17th chapter of Genesis. The Lord said to Abraham, “I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be you perfect”, that is, decided. Presently, in that chapter, out comes the reason why the Lord appeared to Abraham in his almightiness. And unto the Christian it is a delightful truth, is this truth of Jehovah’s almighty and eternal power, because it is such a firm foundation for that beautiful advice given in the 26th of Isaiah, “Trust you in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Now in that same chapter the Lord reveals his covenant to Abraham; and there is a kind of threefold aspect given of that covenant, as a type of that everlasting covenant that is in Christ Jesus. And what can be more blessed than that the Lord should appear in solemn oath and in solemn engagement to be eternally his God? The first feature of the covenant there given is that of circumcision; and we will take the last verse of the 2nd chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans to explain this part of the perfection of the new covenant, namely, that “he is a Jew, which is one inwardly.” Now the Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew, and the people of God being one with him, they are spiritual Jews. Now the word “Jew” means *praise*. It comes from the word “Judah,” and means *praise*. Jesus Christ was a Jew, and the word “Jew,” as I have said, means *praise*. Now Jesus Christ is all praise, and we are all blame; that is just about the difference between Jesus Christ and ourselves, that he is all praise and we are all blame; for the Lord looked down from heaven, and there was none righteous, no, not one; there was none that did good, no, not one; there was not one person he could speak well of. If he said anything concerning us, it must be something against us. Sinners originally, sinners in heart, sinners in lip, and sinners in life, we are nothing but blame. And Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is all praise; not a fault to be found about him, not a spot, not a superfluity, not a deficiency; no, he is all praise. “Whose praise is not of men.” Christ is our praise; he is all praise. Well, then, Jesus Christ took all our blame, and we come into oneness with him, and are constituted what he is, all praise. So that, apart from Jesus Christ, not a word can be said in our favor; but if brought into the faith of Christ, and made one with him, then not a syllable is said against us. Now, then, he is all praise who is a Jew inwardly: you are all praise with God. See in Solomon’s Song how the Savior speaks of the church; all praise, does not attach any blame, or fault, or spot, you are all praise, “You are all fair; there is no spot in you.” He, then, is all fair, he is all praise, who is a Jew inwardly, and whose circumcision is that of the heart. His heart is circumcised to love the truth; the enmity of his heart is slain, and his heart is circumcised to love the truth. “Whose circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Now, then, let me receive this covenant of circumcision; so that the covenant of circumcision means oneness with the Jew, with Christ, who is all praise. And I am sure we shall need almighty power to enable us to hold this truth fast. “Walk before me and be you perfect.”

How can I be perfect? In oneness with him that was perfect. How can I be blameless? In oneness with him who was blameless. Now, if we are brought to this, have this inward circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, and thus receive Christ, what is the conclusion? Why, God in his almightiness is on our side; that is the conclusion. And this is the great secret of all the wonders that the saints have achieved, and of all the sufferings they have undergone. It is in this way that, as their day, so has been their strength. Now this is the religion that the world will not approve, this oneness with Christ, by which we get rid of our guilt, and sin, and mortality, and the law, and its curse, and Satan, and death, and all necessities, and all adversities. Why, you know the name, I need not occupy the time in reminding you, you know the name or names that men put in the world upon this religion; and if you stand out thus for such godliness as this, you will have none but the Lord on your side; but you will have him on your side with his whole heart, and with his whole soul. Well, Lord, everybody hates this religion of perfection in Christ. Never mind; I am God Almighty; and when you can meet with a power equal to mine, then the power must stand in the balance; and if you can meet with a power superior to mine, then you may despair. But how paltry are all opposing powers when set by the side of the almighty power of the everlasting God? Another feature of that covenant was an inheritance the Lord gave to Abraham by that covenant; and so it is by the same order of things that the Lord has given to us everlasting life, and that is a good heritage; and everlasting light, and that is a good heritage; and everlasting joy, and that is a good heritage; and everlasting plenty, and that is a good heritage. And I may just say to you here, the Lord laid very great stress, as you may see in the 17th of Genesis, the Lord laid very great stress upon Abraham keeping this covenant, and abiding by this covenant. Oh, then, give me Jesus Christ as that blameless One, that faultless One, that righteous One; by oneness with him I am constituted blameless, faultless, holy, righteous, approved, accepted, loved, blessed, honored, saved, exalted; by oneness with him, my coming short of the inheritance is utterly impossible; and no such thought as ever leaving or forsaking us ever entered into the mind of the Lord. Thus, then, we see the position into which the Christian is brought and see how almighty power is on his side here, not conditionally, but absolutely. So, I say, the Lord lays great stress upon keeping that covenant, this new covenant. There are a great many covenants in the Bible; there was the temporal covenant the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and there was the covenant of the Ten Commandments, made at Sinai; and there was the covenant of the Levitical priesthood that he made in the plains of Moab; and there were several covenants made afterwards, many covenants; all these were merely temporal. The covenant you are to keep is that good will of God in Christ Jesus; the covenant you are to hold fast is that covenant of blamelessness that you have in Christ Jesus; the covenant you are to hold fast is that covenant of promise of which the apostle speaks in the 9th of the Hebrews, "That they which are called," he says, "might receive the promise of *eternal* inheritance." So that the covenant we have to hold fast is the promise of eternal inheritance. "Ah," says one, "gladly, gladly, ah, most gladly do I hold fast the belief of the blamelessness that we have in Christ; but I am afraid it is not my happy lot." But it is your happy lot; if you see it, and if you love it, and if you hold it fast, and stand fast against every doctrine that would mar that covenant, stand fast against everything that opposes it, it is yours. For the Lord does not tantalize people; if he had not intended it for you he would not thus have revealed it, and brought you to acknowledge that there is no other way in which you can appear accepted before him. Had he meant to destroy you, you would have remained to this day as blind to this covenant of perfection in Christ as you once were; but you are not blind to it, and you may say, and that in the joy of your heart, when the Lord shall enable you to say so, "Whereas I was blind to this covenant, now I see." And nothing else will do; keep that hold it fast, buy it at any price, part with it at no price. Can we

need anything better than that? It is a covenant of inheritance, promise of eternal inheritance. Ah, say you, it is a blessed promise, delightful promise, a promise yea and amen. I hope I do lean upon it, and I am somewhat supported by it, and live upon it; but I am afraid it is not mine. But it is yours, it is yours; you are brought to where Cain was never brought, you are brought to where Ishmael was never brought, you are brought to where Esau was never brought, you are brought to where Judas was never brought. Judas knew nothing of this new covenant, otherwise he would not have sold its Mediator for contemptible silver. You are brought to where Demas was never brought; for if he had known the promise of this eternal inheritance, he never would have given the preference to this dying world. You are brought to where Ananias and Sapphira were never brought, or they would not have trifled with God and his truth the way they did. You are brought to where Simon Magus was never brought; for had he been brought to see into this everlasting covenant he would not have supposed the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money; not that I think that is much worse; to think the Holy Ghost can be purchased with money is not worse than thinking heaven can be purchased by human works. I do not think Simon Magus thinking the Holy Ghost can be purchased with money is much worse than supposing that the creature can do something to help himself to eternal life. The one simply offers money, and the other his own doings, and they are both conditional, both the doctrines and both the acts. Now, then, the gospel of God's omnipotence. Here is God in his eternal power, defending his sworn covenant, and supporting his people in standing by the same. Here is the Lord saying to every one of his children, "I am Almighty God; walk before me." Do not walk before men; do not think about them; take me into account. If ever you are in any trouble, take me into account, reckon me; reckon upon my power, reckon upon my promise, reckon upon my covenant; reckon upon that perfection that is in my dear Son; reckon upon that inheritance to which you shall come. And also, reckon another thing that I know the way to it better than you do. You would like to go direct across the wilderness; but my plan is to lead you here, and lead you there, and try you here, and try you there, and lead you about the wilderness, that you may know what is in your heart, learn your own weakness, and learn to lean upon and live upon my almighty power.

I hardly know that I dare enter into the other gospel aspects, and I will pass by one, for I see it will occupy all the time, this first part of the subject, else. Thus, then, the way for God Almighty to be on our side is oneness with Jesus Christ in his blamelessness, and our blamelessness before God in Christ. The way for the Lord God Almighty, the Lord God Omnipotent, to be on our side, is for us to be one with that covenant, the promise of eternal inheritance. Get into any other position whatever, you may have whatever you may, but if you have not the love of this covenant, this new covenant gospel, whatever other position you get into, though you may have the world with you, and circumstances wonderfully in your favor, for the wicked often prosper, and spread themselves as the green bay tree; but then, what will the end be? so that whatever position you get into, if it be not a position of conformity to that perfection that is in Christ, and to that sworn covenant of the blessed God, ere long you will find almighty power against you, and then, "if you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" But if thus brought to Jesus, and to receive him, to receive this sworn covenant, then you will join in the anthem of our text sooner or later; yea, now sometimes, and by-and-bye ultimately, "We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty," and he remains God Almighty. I will mention one more, and that is this: "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High." Always remember that Jesus Christ is the secret place of the Most High. The world knows Jesus Christ in the history

of his person and work; men know Jesus Christ in the letter; but no one knows him thus in that perfection of which we have spoken, but they to whom the Father shall reveal him. And, therefore, if he be revealed to us in a way that endears him thus, it is the Father that has done this. "Now they that dwell in the secret place of the Most High", that is, in Christ, Christ the secret place, "shall abide under the shadow", the protection, the care, "of the Almighty." Sin may come and knock at the door, and say, I want you. Ah, you may want long enough; no power over me now; you are sent away. Satan may come and knock at the door; Almighty Power answered sin; Jesus Christ with his own arm brought salvation from sin; sin may knock at the door, almighty power will answer that, and we shall be as quiet; Satan may knock at the door, I want that Peter. You may want long enough. Ah, but I mean to have that Joshua. But the Lord means you shall not have him. And death may knock at the door. Says death, I want this man. Ah, you won't have him; you will have his body, and that you won't have long. Free-will may come squeaking at the door; the Christian will laugh at that: duty-faith will come squeaking at the door, and want you to be more charitable; true faith will laugh at that; the Christian will despise the whole of it. Why, he says, here I dwell in an abode nigh which no plague can come, no arrow, no pestilence can reach me here; here I have life, and here I have light, here I have health, here I have freedom, here I have the munitions of rocks for my defense; here bread is given, and here waters are sure. "He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; with long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." Now how suited this is, whether we know it or not, unto us! If the Lord be on our side on the ground of what is good in us, how very few decrees of power there could be in our favor. We have something, that are Christians, good in us, "There was found in him some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel;" but then the good that is in me, the life, the faith, the hope, and love, are all limited; and then I have evil in me; and so, if the Lord is on my side just as far as the goodness that is in me authorizes him, I should come very badly off, because the Lord would have to be more against me than for me. And if you know your own heart, and balance the good with the evil, you will find that your old man is a man in sin, while your new man is an infant in grace; and so you have more evil than good, and if the two be balanced, the Lord would have to be more against you than for you. But if the matter be settled not by what you are in yourself, but by what you are in Jesus Christ and in God's sworn promise, then he is on your side in every way, without being against you at all, because he has nothing against you; beholding your shield, and looking upon the face of his anointed. This is the life to live, and I feel anxious for you all, and I hope a heartfelt, solemn prayer to God, especially when you come to die, that this may be your position. I can hardly describe what some of the dear saints of God have felt in a dying hour by simply looking to the things that I am now stating, namely, to that entirety of exemption they have from evil in Christ, and the certainty of God's promise to be with them, and not to leave nor forsake them, but to lose sight of everything else, and thus look to that Jesus Christ that embodies all these things. Now that is real religion, and whatsoever does not thus receive Christ and endear him is not pleasing to God.

But I must step into the next department, *eternal sameness*, "which are, and were, and are to come." We must take this also in the gospel sense. We will have a scripture to explain it, have the Lord Jesus Christ to explain it. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday," when we were chosen in him; "blessed with all spiritual blessings in him;" that is what he was yesterday, aforesaid, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." So that the people were not chosen into one position, and their blessings put into another position; but they were chosen in Christ, and their blessings were put into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Christ lost nothing, he remains the same.

When we take a certain position in life we are obliged to try it to see whether we shall be satisfied with it or not, and we cannot always foresee whether in a few years' time we shall be altogether satisfied with the choice we have made, and with our arrangements, and with our plans. We are limited, and therefore there is no possibility of our saying how that we may be satisfied with today may appear unto us tomorrow; and hence, through this limitation of knowledge, of course we necessarily turn and twist about a little sometimes. But not so with the Lord. He foresaw that the period would never arrive when he would be dissatisfied with his choice; he foresaw that the time would never come when he would think less of his dear Son; that the time would never come when the Lamb would think less of his bride; that the time would never come when as a father he would think less of, or care less for his children; that the time would never come when he as a God would grow weary of his saints. He foresaw it, and, therefore, foreseeing this, he took that position in which he is happy to eternity, and in which our souls also must in that happiness be made eternally happy, "The same yesterday," "which were," "and today;" so Jesus Christ still retains every one of the blessings given to him. Has he ever lost one? If he has, which one has he lost? Has he lost the life? No. Has he lost the light? No. Has he lost his holiness? No. His righteousness? No. His power? No. His people? No. Enumerate what you may, he has lost nothing, still remains the same. Adam loses everything; we ourselves must part, as I shall have to dwell upon more particularly in the remarks I shall make this evening, with everything; yet Jesus Christ retains everything, except our sins and the curse, which he has put eternally away. We give you thanks in your almightiness on our side; we give you thanks that you are what you were, and that you were what you are; that you are what you will be, and that you will be what you were and what you are, a faithful and unchanging God. Here stands our eternal triumph. And Jesus Christ not only the same yesterday and today, but "forever" forever. What a mercy for us! Indeed, it is everything for us, it is so. There needs no alteration in the person or in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a pleasing virtue in man or woman is that of constancy, arising from sincerity! pleasing virtue, find it where you may. When you see persons stick to their principle through thick and thin, they do by degrees make you worship them pretty well. So, our God; none but the Christian knows how the infallible faithfulness of the blessed God endears him. Poor rebellious creatures as we are, changing in a thousand ways; yet he still remains. "Having loved his own," and he knew all that would take place in their life, yet in the face of it all, "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." And the Greek word there means not only "unto the end," but also means "forever;" not only "forever," but it also means "to the very uttermost," that they could not be loved more. "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the very uttermost." We give God thanks, then, in his eternal power and in his eternal sameness. God was, God is, immutable, abstractedly speaking, and his counsel must always stand; but then his counsel differs in the person of his dear Son from his counsel anywhere else. And I may, just to illustrate this, observe that the counsel of God, whether Adam had eaten the fruit or not, must stand; because the counsel of God was that if he did eat of it he should die, and if he did not eat of it he should live. And so, the Jewish nation; God's counsel was that if they obeyed they should prosper; if they did not obey they should not prosper; so that God's counsel must stand, let men do what they may. But then God's counsel in Christ Jesus is different from what it is anywhere else, because his counsel in Christ Jesus as much undertakes to turn the people into Christians, as much undertakes to make them obey him, as much undertakes to make them know him, as much undertakes to make them love him, as much undertakes to bring them to heaven, as the same counsel undertook that Christ should come to earth. I make no hesitation in saying it, God's counsel regarding their going to heaven was just as certain as Christ's coming to earth. Thousands of years rolled over before he did come; there stood the prediction that

he should come; there was no uncertainty about Christ coming to earth, and there is no uncertainty about his sheep going to heaven. What a monstrous doctrine that is! I really wonder that the Wesleyans, very enlightened men some of them, and intellectual, and clever, excellent men, I wonder they are not ashamed of such a doctrine as to say that some are lost for whom Christ died; when the word of God unites the Savior's death, the certainty of his death, with the certainty of their eternal glory. Why, "the redeemed of the Lord *shall* return, and they *shall* come to Zion." So then there was no uncertainty in his coming to earth; there is no uncertainty in our going to heaven; the two are placed together. So, I say the counsel of God here, in Christ Jesus, differs from what it is anywhere else.

Well, I have said nothing instructive to you this morning, but I will tell you what, I thought that some of you might have some cares, and fears, and doubts, arising from many sources, and I thought, if the Lord were pleased to give you an apprehension of the way in which he is in his almightiness on your side, it may be the same help to you that it has been to me. And I thought, if you had a clear apprehension of his eternal sameness in and by his dear Son, that God remains the same God, Christ remains the same Christ, on your side, that it may comfort you concerning your faith, increase your confidence, and you, perhaps, go away and say, Well, our minister has told us nothing this morning we did not know before, but, nevertheless, it has been told with savor, it has been told with encouragement, and if we have not had much instruction, we have something to cheer up the heart, and that is better; something that is food for the soul, and that is better; something to endear the Savior, and that is better; something to enable us more to love God and glorify God, and that is better. So that spiritual things, we want them in their savor and in their power, such as shall support us; for, after all, that is the best instruction of all, to know what it is to be restored, and revived, and encouraged; and to know what it is to feel our souls glow with love to God; that is the best knowledge of all; there is no knowledge to equal it in value or happy consequences.

But third, *his rightful government*; "You have taken to you your great power, and have reigned," What is his great power? The word *power* sometimes conveys the idea of right; you have not power so-and-so, meaning right. Let us use the word *right* here, for the sake of explaining the word power, "You have taken to you your great *right*." You say, I should not wonder but what you are going to tell us that Jesus Christ is that great right, and that Jesus Christ is that great power. Well, I really am. And "you have taken to you your great power;" I should not wonder but what you are going to tell us that God took Jesus Christ to heaven. Well, I am really going to tell you that, but you are a little beforehand with me. "Your great power." There was God's great power in the grave; there it lay, apparently powerless; and the foolish devil, I was going to say, though I ought not to say it, for he is wiser than I am in some respects, rolled a pebble upon the mouth of the sepulcher, and thought that could stop almighty power. Why, say you, it was a great stone. Well, it was a great stone in relation to mortal power, but what a grain of sand, what an atom, by the side of omnipotent power! So, the devil had rolled a pebble upon the mouth of the sepulcher, and put a cobweb seal upon it, and supposed almighty power would be frightened! Why, the angel came down, touched it with his finger, back rolled the pebble, down he sat, Roman soldiers frightened, went into a sort of trance, did not come to their senses again until everything was done the Lord intended should be done. So, you see how the Lord paralyzes our daring foes, and how he can send them to sleep, and what fools he can turn them into. Is there anything too hard for the Lord our God? There lies God's great power in the grave. Now, God says, I will take up that power, and by that power I will

save untold millions; by that power I will turn the whole world upside down; by that power I will bring in soul after soul, sinner after sinner, trophy after trophy, victory after victory, glory after glory. And so God took to himself his dear Son; down came the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; away went thousands of souls out of the hands of the devil, and out of the hands of death, and out of the hands of hell, and out of the hands of the law, and out of the hands of sin, and out of the hands of the curse; and God took to him his great salvation, his great power, and reigned. And this is what the saints rejoiced in then, this is what they rejoice in now, that Christ was taken from the grave, received into heaven, to sit on the right hand of God. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit you at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." Now the word *power*, I say, conveys the idea of right. Oh, how rightfully does grace reign; if grace reign by the righteousness of Christ, how rightfully it does reign! Oh, how much more power is there in Christ's righteousness to authorize grace to reign, than there is in sin to forbid the reign of grace! how much more power is there in Christ's righteousness to authorize grace to reign, than there is in Satan to forbid the reign of grace! how much more power is there in the mediatorial work of Christ to authorize grace to reign, than there is in the world to forbid its reign, or than there is in death or hell to forbid its reign! Who can forbid his reign? Who can shake his throne? Who can invalidate his right? Who can say that God is unjust in the salvation of the sinner? Who can say that grace reigns unjustly? It reigns through righteousness; it reigns righteously. "You have taken to you your great right;" it is a great right, a divine right, an everlasting right; "and have reigned," and do reign, and will reign; the very song of heaven; "The Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Some of our good friends say, Ah, the Lord will take to himself his great power by-and-bye and begin a millennium. I wish you would give up that nonsense, for it is only that; you had better follow your minister; not that I wish you to follow him unless you see he is right. Now, am I not right in this? Is not Jesus Christ the power of God? Did not God take Christ from the tomb to the throne? He did. Does not God in love and mercy reign, to the salvation of sinners by that right that Christ has established? Does not God save by the power that there is in Christ's salvation to save? Christ wrought the salvation; his blood is able to cleanse the foulest stain, his righteousness able to justify from all things, whether a Manasseh, a Magdalene, or whatever the sinner may be, his work has in it an omnipotence and eternity of power. So that he reigns for ever and ever, takes to himself this right. And if God does not take to himself his dear Son, there is no way in which he can reign in the way of mercy, and lovingkindness, and salvation. So then, Christian, would you take to yourself great power? Then you must take to yourself Christ Jesus. As many as received him, they received power to become the sons of God; to cry, Abba, Father; to glory in the dear Savior's name, and to rejoice that God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. This is not something merely future, then; it is something past, something present, something to come.