

THE NEW MOON

A SERMON

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“Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” Psalm 81:3

THE moon, as seen through the clear atmosphere of the East, is an object of very great sublimity and of exquisite beauty. Without taking this into consideration we shall not clearly understand the many allusions that are made to it, in order figuratively to set forth spiritual and eternal things. If, therefore, we look at the moon as seen through our own cloudy atmosphere, we shall almost wonder at some of the comparisons in the Scriptures to set forth divine, and excellent, and eternal things by this figure. We must, therefore, look at it in the right light. And the moon in the 89th Psalm is personified, and spoken of as a witness; and it does appear to me that in a considerable number of scriptures, nearly all the scriptures that will come before us this morning, the moon is intended, when used figuratively in the Bible, to set forth the gospel. And it does very well for that, because the moon certainly does derive its light from the sun, and the gospel certainly does derive its light from the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence now I say, that in the 89th Psalm it is spoken of as a witness, and this is a character belonging to the gospel. The gospel is to be preached to all nations as a witness, and so the gospel comes and bears witness. And before I enter in detail upon the subject, I would remind you of that of which the moon is represented in the 89th Psalm as being a witness, answering to that which the gospel testifies. First, the wondrous oath of the blessed God. “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.” David there, of course, means the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Lord swearing by his holiness does appear to me that Jehovah in his holiness, as in his other perfections, is infallible; so that it will stand good so long as Jehovah remains holy. And then the Holy Spirit defines the several items of his oath. “His seed,” that is, the seed of Christ, “shall endure forever.” Is not this in sweet accordance with the testimony of the gospel, which says that “you are born again of an incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever”? And, therefore, one thing of which the moon, as we shall presently see, is called upon to witness, is the eternal safety of all the seed of Christ. And then the next item is the luminous character of the Savior’s government, that “his throne shall be as the sun;” there shall be no darkness about it. And is it not so, that we are brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the government of Jesus Christ? He has reigned to the putting down of sin and death; he has reigned to the shining

away of all darkness, that by the establishment of his throne the darkness of sin, and the darkness of the curse of the law, and the darkness of death, and the darkness of mysterious dispensations will all pass away, and his throne shall be as the sun. Here, then, we have the Lord in an immutable oath. And remember, that he who is favored to understand this, and to receive it in the love of it, does thereby prove his interest in it; for the language of every gospel truth is, "I love them that love me; they that seek me shall find me." So, if you love this immutable oath, and you are seeking its advantages, then that does love you; and if you love the testimony that "his seed shall endure forever," that testimony loves you; and if you love the government of the Savior, his luminous government, that he shall reign till all darkness has fled, until there be not an adversary nor an evil occurrent, then that same testimony loves you. "It shall be established forever," this state of things shall be established forever, "as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." Here, then, it appears to me that the moon is called in, as a kind of figure of the gospel, to bear testimony of these eternal truths. There must, I am sure, be something very important in the language of our text. Our text is, I think, particularly emphatic, "Blow up the trumpet," a form of speech that seems to denote great interest, as though it should say, "Do not blow the trumpet sparingly, but blow it with all your might; sound it aloud from one end of the land to the other. 'Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.'" There must, therefore, be something spiritually meant in this new moon that it is worthy of such emphasis. And then there is another emphatic expression, too; and that is, "in the time appointed." How good was the Lord to appoint seasons of festivity! and he has appointed seasons of mercy for all that seek his face. "On our solemn feast-day."

Now we may divide what we have to say upon our text into four parts. Here is first, then, *the simile used*, the new moon. Here is, secondly, *the command to sound the trumpet on that occasion*. Here is, thirdly, *the divine appointment*, "at the appointed time." Here is, lastly, *the solemnity of the occasion*, "on our solemn feast day."

We notice then, first, keeping to the idea that the moon is made use of figuratively to denote the gospel, the first thing the moon is called to witness is what the Lord has provided for poor sinners. Hence, when Moses is led on to describe the blessing of Joseph, he said, "The precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon." Now here are precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and put forth by the moon. Let us take those fruits spiritually, and then I am sure, though I will take only one view, I might take several, but I will take only one view of those fruits; are not those fruits a figure of the promises of the gospel? And as the sun brings forth the fruits to perfection, I ask, who brought the promises of God to perfection? Are not all the promises that are adapted to us, are they not in Christ Jesus? Has not God made the promises to faith in Christ Jesus? Has not God made the promises to hope in Christ Jesus? Has not God made the promises to love to Christ Jesus? Has not God made the promises to decision for Christ Jesus? Does the Lord promise you mercy? How can that promise be yea and amen but by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Hence the apostle, who entered fully into this matter and rejoiced in it, said, "Brethren, we bring you glad tidings, that the promise which the Lord made unto our fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob;" and the promise was, "In blessing I *will* bless you;" and that promise was ripened into perfection by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; "he has thus fulfilled the promise unto us their children." Here, then, are the precious fruits brought forth by the sun. And I have said the moon appears to be intended as a figure of the gospel; just look at the words there, and see how it answers; "brought forth by the sun, put forth by the moon." As I have before said, I will not meddle with it philosophically, but only theologically. "Put forth by

the moon.” Now is it not so? Does not the gospel put forth the very promises which Christ has ripened into perfection? Does not the gospel put forth the very truths that Christ has confirmed? I might run through, for I hope we are not of that make that we are beginning to say concerning the truth, “ My soul loathes this light bread;” I trust we are not yet weary of hearing the same things; but if you take any one gospel truth, you will not find one of them confirmed in any way but by the mediation of the Savior. Take your election, for instance; if you are not chosen in Christ, and all impediments removed by his atonement, your election could not stand good; and if you are not ordained to eternal life in Christ, by whom all hindrances are removed, that decree could not stand good, your sins would turn the decree against you; but then his blood cleansing from all sin, the decree still remains in your favor. And then, again as to life; you could not continue to live if the life were not by Christ Jesus; because then sin would deal with you as it did with Adam, turn the life into death, turn the righteousness into unrighteousness, and turn your holiness into unholiness, and turn your freedom into bondage, and all would be lost. But then by Christ Jesus everything is ripened into perfection; “you are complete in Christ.” Thus, then, the moon does bear witness; so that the same truths which are ripened into perfection by the work of Jesus Christ are put forth by the gospel. There is a sweet harmony between the two; and the more I look at what I am now stating, the more my hope is encouraged in the Lord. I feel from day to day, what should I do but for that perfection of the promise that is by the perfection of Christ, but for that perfection of state that is by the perfection of Christ? And, my hearer, how will your soul be ripened into perfection for eternal glory? By Christ Jesus, no other way. And the gospel puts forth this manifest truth. And how will glory itself be perfect? Why, by Christ Jesus the Lord.

“All human beauties, all divine,
In my Beloved meet and shine.”

And you will observe, in connection with these precious fruits that are brought forth by Jesus Christ, and put forth by the moon, or the gospel, in connection therewith, there is everything you could desire. There is good-will. Hence in that same connection, 33rd of Deuteronomy, “The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.” That has often cheered my heart. I have thought, what would all these promises be if not given with good-will? and what would our reception be if we were not received with good-will? and what would our entrance into heaven be if we were not received with good-will? and what would our continuation there be, if we did not continue there by the Lord’s good-will? “The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.” To show that his will was good I had almost said that the blessed God came as low as he could come; he dwelt in the bush. It is a figure, I think, leaving you upon this point, of course, as I do upon all others, to judge for yourselves; but I think that that points, that bush, to the Savior taking the likeness of sinful flesh, taking our sin upon him, doing God’s good will. I think the bush may have been to represent that. And then that bush was burning, but was not consumed. So not all the flames of sin and affliction could consume the Savior. So that it was a great sight to see an incarnate God; it was a great sight to see Jesus the Man of sorrows; a great sight to see a poor sinner through all his faults, through all his troubles, preserved, brought off victorious at the last, through the good-will of God, that good-will being in Christ Jesus. What a nice thing it is to have a good-will toward God after this order of things, a good-will towards that perfection that Christ has brought in, a good-will towards God in Christ Jesus in what he has done, and a good-will towards God in what he will yet do; for “if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, not according to what he has not.” But I

will not say any more upon this part. Thus, then, one thing fairly intended is, that the gospel puts forth those very fruits which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, has ripened into perfection.

Second, the moon is a witness not only of the perfection of Christ, but also of victory. 10th of Joshua: Joshua was standing, it appears to me so, at least, between Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon. Gibeon would then be on the east of Joshua, and the valley of Ajalon would be on the west of Joshua. Joshua here calls upon the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; so that the sun was nearly down. Now the original shows clearer than our translation does, that when the sun stood still, it was in the horizon; that is, it was just setting; and there it stopped, instead of going quite down; so that it shone upon the western side of Gibeon, where light was wanted, in order that Israel might in that light go on and gain the victory. And then the moon, of course, would at the same time be full, and would be in the east, directly opposite the sun, and would shine into the eastern side of the valley of Ajalon; and thus the light would extend to those parts where the enemy was, in order that the Israelites might complete the victory. Now what a beautiful figure this is of the presence of God by Christ Jesus, and of the presence of God by the gospel! The sun standing still, I meddle not with it philosophically. I smile at the difficulties which scientific men raise. They reason, and reason, and reason, and I think they all reason wrongly; because he who created unnumbered worlds, he who is the Great Inconceivable, he who is underived, eternal, and infinite, why, he can do ten thousand things that man cannot comprehend. And shall I for one moment stumble at the fact of the moon and the sun standing still, and going down not for about a whole day, because I cannot reconcile the language with science, or with abstract facts? I have nothing to do with those things. How Jonah could live three days and three nights in the whale's belly, I desire to be thankful I am not called upon philosophically to describe. But the blessed God says it was so, and that's enough for me. And if the Lord had told me that the sun was turned into green cheese, and then turned back again, I should believe it as comfortably as could be; if the Lord had told me that the earth, on that day, had been turned into a plum pudding, and then turned back again into what it was before, I should have been quite content. When God says a thing, and I can get at all to understand what is meant, I am satisfied. And so, I am with the sun standing still. We know quite well that the sun does not move as other planets do; but there is the Lord's account of it, and there I rest, and there I rejoice. And I take it, then, in its spiritual meaning, and it will become an illustration of one truth. Is the Lord with you in the light of salvation? Is his salvation a light to you? Is his righteousness a light to you? Yes. And is his gospel a light to you, as a light to your feet and a lamp to your path? Then if that be the case, I will tell you this one thing: that as the Lord abode that day by the Israelites until the victory was complete, so he will abide with you all your journey through; he will never leave you. You may be in darkness as regards enjoyment, but you will never again be in the darkness of ignorance. You will never be without the light of understanding; you will never be without the light of hope; you will never be without the light of his approbation, the light of his truth. And he will be with you as long as you have one foe within; as long as you have one foe without; as long as you have one trouble; as long as you have one burden; as long as you are led to heave one sigh, to shed one tear, to undergo one trial, he will abide by you. "Your sun shall never, go down; your moon shall never withdraw itself." He will abide by you, and in the light of Christ, and in the light of the everlasting gospel, you will go on from strength to strength, until the last enemy is conquered, swallowed up in eternal victory; and this shall be your hope. Here, then, the moon is a witness, first, of that perfection that is in Christ; and then, secondly, of his victory. And does not the gospel everywhere set forth the victory the Savior has wrought, and set forth the delightful truth that our God will go on to give us the

victory? I suppose you all have your troubles of some kind or the other, some one way, and some the other. Well, now, the Lord help you to leave it with him, and go on in his fear and in his love, and be decided for his truth. He will appear for you; he will astonish you. Don't you know, brethren, there is such a scripture as this, that "my people shall tremble for all the goodness that I procure unto them"? He will so break in upon your soul, and will so appear for you in circumstances, that you will tremble at it, as it were. You will say, "Well, I never could have thought it; I felt I could not pray; I groaned, and mourned, and moped about, and wished I had never existed, and cursed the day of my birth; I seemed to be such a poor sort of creature; and yet now you have given me victory over this, and that, and the other. Ah! what shall I do? 'I will take the cup of salvation; I will call upon the name of the Lord.'" Truly the Lord is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Some of you well know I am not now speaking a fable, but that it is true. Some of you can bear testimony of the power of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, then, the gospel, the moon, witnesses the perfection of Christ, and the faithfulness of the Lord in abiding by his people. I must confess that the Lord abiding by me, which he has done, and which has often made me tremble, because I know there is no reason in me why he should; but then he has reasons in himself why he should; I must confess, as far as my own feelings are concerned, it is a greater miracle in my eyes than the standing still of the sun and the moon. And so, will every Christian confess this. The Lord help us to trust in him, and to look to him, and to say, "Lord, we do believe that your mercy is not gone, and that your promise does not fail; that you always have heard the cry of your children; and that you will appear for them: and that they shall do valiantly."

The third thing the moon witnesses is peace. And how suited the moon is to this! "In his days," 72nd Psalm, "shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." I think here again the gospel is meant. What a tranquil object is the moon! Some, who have travelled in the East, and perhaps some of you have, will say, "Well, in some respects, when I am in the East, I seem to like the moon better than the sun." Why, how is that? "Why, because its light is so powerful, and yet at the same time so soft, and so beautiful, and so nice, that I can enjoy it; but the sun is so overwhelming, that I sink beneath it." Well, so it was with the disciples. When they got into the presence of the sun on the mount of transfiguration, it was so overwhelming that they sank beneath it; and yet they said it was good to be there; but it was more than mortality could endure. So, they said, "Let us build here three tabernacles." Why, you don't know what you are about now, and if you stop much longer you will lose your senses quite; "not knowing what they said;" all they knew was, it was good for them to be there. And so, it is now. If the Lord were to break in upon us in his glory, we should be overwhelmed. And the skin of Moses' face shone with the presence of the Lord's glory. What a wonderful circumstance was that! Why, that would have killed him if the Lord had not supported him, and enabled him to bear that glory. Now, then, the moon of the gospel comes to us in a bearable form. Mind, I am not going to tell you that we like the gospel more than we do Jesus Christ; do not understand that I mean that: my object is to show that the absolute presence of the Lord in his glory would be to us, as we are now constituted, unbearable. Hence John, when he saw the blest Redeemer in his glory, instead of enjoying it, and saying, "Ah, this is blessed; now I am tranquil, quiet, and comfortable," fell at his feet as dead. Jesus laid his right hand upon him, and said, "Fear not; I am he that lives, and was dead; behold, I am alive for evermore." And yet those in glory are fitted for the full glory of the sun; there the moon of the gospel becomes in its light as the light of the sun, though the light of the sun be sevenfold. Ah, what it must be to be in the Lord's open presence! Now, "in his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." The moon is a tranquil

object, and so the gospel is the gospel of peace. When I read a duty-faith sermon, it snatches the bread out of my mouth, strips the robe from my back, throws my crown from my head, and sends me about my business, and tells me to do my work better, or else I shall not have a morsel of anything to eat. And so that sermon throws me away. Well, what do you do then? say you. I throw it away; depend upon it, I don't go after it again; no. But when I come to the peace that is in Christ, I am not scolded there; I am not frowned upon there; I am not taunted there; I am not upbraided there; I am not kicked and cuffed about there; I am not slandered there; I am not treated unkindly there; no, there I am treated kindly, and find that peace that passes all understanding. So it is. Thus, then, concerning Jesus have I spoken unto you, that in him you might have peace. In the world you shall have plenty of tribulation; never mind, you will get over it by-and-bye; "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." First, here is the peace; then the tribulation, to make you prize the peace that is in Christ; then ultimately comes the victory. The moon, then, witnesses the perfection of the fruits brought forth by the sun; witnesses the victory the Lord gives to his people; witnesses that peace that is by Christ Jesus.

Fourth, progress of time. "It shall come to pass, from one new moon to another, from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." Has that been fulfilled? Certainly it has. The Gentiles were gathered in the apostolic age; then was that scripture fulfilled. All flesh, that is, men of all classes and sorts and countries, were brought, by the grace of God, to worship the Lord. "From one new moon to the other;" that I shall have to turn to again presently; say no more about that now. Then again, also, I think in the 12th of the Revelation the gospel is meant by the moon, where the church is represented as clothed with the sun, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, and the moon under her feet. Some tell us the moon there is the ceremonial law; well, I don't see that myself. And Cruden says, but then Cruden seems, when he said that, to have forgotten the difference between the appearance of the moon here and in the East, Cruden says it is the church, with the world under her feet. Well, I don't think it means that there. I think if Mr. Cruden had been in the East, and had said so there, an Oriental would have looked at him with great wonder. What, sir, have that sublime object under her feet! It won't do at all; would not admit that, no. And therefore, I take the moon there to be the gospel. Now the moon under her feet does not mean the moon abstractedly speaking, any more than her being clothed with the sun means clothed with the sun abstractedly speaking. It means, she was clothed with the light of the sun; that the testimonies of the prophets and apostles, called twelve stars, culminated upon her head, crowned her with eternal glory; and the light of the moon was under her feet; that is, the gospel; and the gospel is to show us the way through this world. And how wonderfully does the gospel do so! I say, how wonderfully does the gospel do so! You see the moon is so constituted as to scatter rays of light in all directions. The moon is wonderfully mountainous. If it were smooth, all the light would concentrate to one point, and the moon would appear like a little twinkling star; but by the lofty mountains and deep valleys, rough surface, and so on, the rays are scattered in all directions. And so, the Lord has given us a Bible like it. There are some deep valleys in the Bible; and there are some high mountains. He has scattered the rays of light in all directions; so that, let a child of God get where he may, he is pretty sure to find a little gospel light upon his path, let him get into what trouble he may. As saith one, "Count it all joy when you fall into divers' temptations;" that word might be rendered "tribulations;" "when you fall into divers' tribulations; knowing that tribulation works patience." "Let patience have her perfect work." Thus, then, I think in all the scriptures I have named, the moon is intended to set forth the gospel; first, as putting forth these fruits that Christ has ripened; second, by setting forth the victory the Lord will give us; third,

setting forth that peace that is in him; and fourth, as setting forth that light that shines upon our path all the time we are travelling in the night of time.

But then the text says, “the *new* moon.” I think the new moon points to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moon undergoes a kind of figurative death; it goes into darkness. And we will suppose that we did not understand the fact that there will be a new moon; and when we saw the moon go quite into darkness, that is, in its relation to this earth, we should say, Well, the moon is gone; we shall never see the moon again, you may depend upon it; whatever shall we do? The moon is gone, we shall never have any moonlight again. And, depend upon it, the disciples thought that Jesus Christ was gone when he died; thought he would never appear again. But then the man who understands the matter, he would say, You will have the new moon; it will rise again; it will reappear. And so, did the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three reasons, I think, why the moon may be a striking figure of Christ’s resurrection. First, sameness; the same moon that goes into a kind of figurative death is the same moon that reappears. The same person that died on Calvary’s cross reappeared to his people. That is one, I think, thing that represents, suitable to represent, the resurrection of Christ. The second is the certainty of it. None of us has any doubt about the new moon. And so the Old Testament saints knew that Christ would rise from the dead; they gloried in his resurrection, they sang of it in this way: “Your dead men shall live; with my dead body shall they arise;” “Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs.” Third, because of divine order. The moon is regulated, not by the control of man, but entirely by the Lord. So was the Lord Jesus Christ. He walked, lived and died, rose, and ascended to glory, as the Lord had ordained. Thus, then, the new moon sets forth the resurrection of Christ (including in that one point, but time does not allow me to dwell upon it, everything that is new). Christ rose into a new life; brings his people into a new life, into new creature-ship, into a new heaven, into a new earth, into a new and living way, into a new covenant, into a new song. “Behold, old things are passed away; all things are become new.” This is a most vital matter, this matter of Christ’s resurrection; and my religion, if it does not consist in the soul being raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost, if it does not consist of faith in the perfection of Christ, then it is a thing of nothing; . nothing else can save the soul.

Now our text shows that these things indicated by the moon, and which I have just hinted to you, that is all, that these things were to be sounded out; that the trumpet was to be sounded. This is only another representation of the same thing; that while the moon is a figure of the gospel, so also the trumpet means the gospel; and this trumpet was to be sounded out. “It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish.” And what shall they come to? Well, they shall come into God’s presence; and his name, as the Lord God merciful and gracious, shall be a matter of rejoicing. And they shall get as high as they wish to get by his righteousness. “Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne; mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted.” So, they will get just as high as God designed, they should get by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So, if this trumpet of the gospel has been made effectual to us, it has brought us, like the publican, into the presence of God, bringing us to rejoice in his name, bringing us to receive his righteousness, and thereby to be exalted.

But lastly, “in the time appointed.” Now the times were left for the Jews to carry out; they might be wrong in the times. But the antitypical times are not left with man. My time of preaching well lies not with me, but with the blessed God; your time of hearing well lies not with you, but with the Lord; your time of fasting lies not with you, but with the Lord; your time of feasting lies not with you, but with the Lord; so that you must say, with David, “All my times are in your hands.”

And if you could get rid of your doubts and fears, and suppose you could put yourself into a confidence of interest in God’s mercy, what would that amount to? Why, simply to delusion. What’s the use of your doing it? Mordecai had more sense in literal things than some have in spiritual. Esther wished him to take off the sackcloth, and put on change of raiment; but he said, “What is the use of that? that won’t turn my mourning into gladness.” But when the king sent for Mordecai, and gave him a garment of fine linen and purple, and a crown of gold, and all the other marks of his royal favor, he could then roll back the tide of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces that stood against him. And so it is now, our times are in God’s hands; blessed are all they that wait for him; when he comes in, then he will deal with you as he did with David, when David said, “You have put off my sackcloth, you have girded me with gladness; therefore shall my glory sing praise unto you.” The appointed time. The vision is for the appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come; it will not tarry.”

And then it says, “On our solemn feast day.” Now this solemn feast day is set in contrast to the heathen festivities, which were gross, sensual, profane, riotous; without reason, without understanding, or without anything that becomes a man. Now, then, the Lord’s feast was solemn, reason, understanding, holiness, righteousness, affection, order, and everything suited to the soul. And is it not so? when we have a good sabbath, how it brings out the thoughts of the mind, how it enlarges the understanding, how it solemnizes the mind! Many a child of God has been so favored as to say,

“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this;
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”

May the Lord increase our acquaintance with these mysteries, for his name’s sake.