

TIMELY WARNING

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning July 30th, 1865

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 7 Number 347

“Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yes, and searched it out.” Job
28:27

THE last verse of this chapter was our text last Lord's day morning, and from want of time and space I was compelled to leave it without opening up many mysteries connected with this last verse; and I felt that I could not leave the neighborhood of this scripture without saying something more upon those mysteries, and showing what appears to me to be their meaning. In dealing with the subject I shall not follow precisely the language of our text, but shall take up the mysteries connected with it; and then, in the concluding of all, each of these four clauses will apply to the great matter of eternal salvation. “Then did he see it;” he saw it from eternity; “and declare it,” soon after, as you are aware, the fall took place; “he prepared it;” he made that provision which is to be possessed and enjoyed forever; “yes, and searched it out;” in order to have everything so skillfully arranged that there should be no weak part found in the whole range of the new covenant; and there never has been, and never will be.

I notice, first, *timely revelation*. Secondly, *the surpassing value of this wisdom*. Thirdly, *the defeat of the adversary*. Fourthly, *the skillful management of the Most High, to bring this to a happy termination*. Lastly, *how suited each clause of our text is as expressive of the same*.

I notice, then, first, *timely revelation*. “He binds the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid brings he forth to light.” You will see at once that we might begin here in almost any part of the Scriptures; “the thing that is hid brings he forth to light;” that is, to whom he is pleased to bring it to light. Hence, when the Savior was born in Bethlehem, he was hidden from what he really was to the world at large. Angels knew him, and summed up his great mission in those beautiful words, “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; good will to men.” And it was revealed also to the shepherds; they knew it; as well as to the wise men of the east. “The thing that is hid brings he forth to light;” namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first place, is that living, that holy thing that has been hidden from men in general; but to his own people “the thing that is hid brings he forth to light.” Let us see the kind of revelation we have of him. Now first, then, we know something of him in the wonderful complexity of his person. We see how he has met that law which God declared should never fail. I have often observed, and I just make the remark as I pass along, how suited, oh, how

suited was the dear Savior in his complexity, not only to sympathize with those whose nature he took, but how suited he was in this complexity to meet the demands of the law! Who can contemplate without pleasure the person of Jesus Christ as under the law? The law originally required perfect human obedience, and thereby met the original requirement of the law; so that the law meets all its original requirements, and loses nothing. But when we step a little farther we are almost lost; the mystery that this same person who by his pure manhood met the original requirement of the law, that this same person is Jehovah; that this same person is God; that this same person is one in the Eternal Three "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Now, then, all that he was more than man, all that he is above the original, requirement of the law. So that if the Lord has prepared eternal life, if the Lord has prepared an eternal inheritance, if the Lord has prepared immortality for the people, if the Lord has prepared that blessedness which eye has not fully seen, nor ear heard, nor entered yet into the heart of man fully to appreciate, how well able is the substitutional work of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring the people to all that! Just so in his death; in his death he had a human nature; he was man, and therefore could suffer; that nature could suffer the penalty due to sin; but that nature could not suffer the penalty due to the sin of millions if he had not been God as well as man. So that when he came to atone for sin there was a nature to suffer, and there was in that nature almighty and eternal power, all the infallible perfections of his deity; so that sin stood not the least chance with him; nor did the curse stand, tremendous as it was, the least chance with him; nor did Satan stand the least chance with him; nor did death stand the least chance with him; he swallowed up the whole. Now it is for us, as the Holy Ghost enables us, to receive this testimony of the person and work of Jesus Christ. And if he be thus revealed to you, you will spurn the gospels of the day; I mean those gospels that call upon the creature to do something towards his own eternal salvation; you will spurn all such, and you will see that salvation through your dying Lord is finished and complete, and that all you want is to lay hold of the same, and to rejoice therein. Now "the thing that is hid brings he forth to light." Here is a wonderful person, the Lord Jesus Christ; he was once hidden from us, but now we know him, now we rejoice in him. The language of every man that does know him is:

"Jesus, my God, I know his name,
His name is all my trust."

Now, then, "he binds the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid brings he forth to light." But how has the Lord brought this forth to light? I never dreamt of such a Savior as this; I never dreamt of such a righteousness as this; I never dreamt of such a redemption as this, such an atonement as this, such a victory as this. I thought Jesus Christ had done something, and I must do the rest. I worked on, and toiled on, and labored on, till I learnt the truth of God's holy word, that my heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; so that all my works, and everything I did, apart from the grace of God, was just like my heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. I look back at the time when I tried to make my old dry prayer-books, and dry formalities, and miserable doings, take in part the place of the Lord Jesus Christ; but now they are all thrown to the moles and to the bats; and whenever I meet, I care not what men may say of me for it, or think of me for it, when I meet with any precept in the Bible I cannot meet myself, I am obliged to have Jesus Christ, and view him as meeting it for me. As we lately said, he diligently obeyed all the statutes, and all the judgments, and all the laws of the Lord. I could bring, I was going to say, a great many precepts against the best men under heaven, that would sink them to

hell if they were dependent on their own personal worth; but I am to meet them by Jesus Christ, I am to meet them as arrayed in Jesus Christ, I am to meet them by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours only." Here then is wisdom, and here is that wisdom that makes us wise to the way in which we shall leave all evils infinite miles behind, and everlastingly possess the Lord himself as our portion, our inheritance forever. "The thing that is hid brings he forth to light." Of course, you see that subject implies all the parts of the gospel, for they are all hidden from us while in a state of nature. Election is another thing that is hidden. And I believe that hundreds of ministers that preach election do not understand it; and I believe in their hearts do not like it, and that they have no real love to it, There it is in the word; they see it in the letter; but it is one thing to see eternal election in the letter of it, and another thing to receive it, in the spirit of it, and in the love of it. What is it then, to receive it in the spirit of it? Why, to feel before God that you are lost, lost to eternity as sure as you exist, if the Lord has not as a matter of sovereign love and pleasure recorded your name personally in the book of life before the foundation of the world; if God has not done that, you must as surely be lost as that you exist. Hence, at the last day it will be, "Whosoever's name was not found written;" and to show that the creature can have no hand in writing it there it is said to be written there from the foundation of the world; "and whosoever's name was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." You may say, "We have eaten and drunk in your presence, and in your name have done many wonderful works;" we are this, and that, and the other; if your name is not there, damned to eternity you must be. And you must be brought to see and feel that you are that degraded, lost, helpless, poor worm of the earth that if election has not made you one with Christ nothing else could; and that if election has not imputed your sins to Christ nothing else could; and that if election has not imputed Christ's work to you nothing else could. Said one, Suppose I am not one of the elect? That is often said in a wrong spirit. How do you say, Suppose I am not one of the elect? What spirit do you say that in? Do you say it in a spirit of carelessness, that you do not care whether you are or not? Because, if so, you are not worth answering. Or do you say it in a spirit of contempt: Suppose I am not elect; I do not think it is an important doctrine at all, an important matter at all. Then you are saying it in a wrong spirit. But if you are saying to yourself, Well, this is a solemn truth; what an awful truth is this! this explains to me what is said, that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" because they do not seek to enter in after the right order. You say, It is so discouraging, because if I am not one of the elect it is no use for me to think of hoping in the Lord. Now let me here sound my old note; my old note is this, that the language of electing grace is, "Him that comes to me I will in no way cast out." If you see your need of it, that will be as a proof that you are interested in it; for God never gives any sinner such an understanding of it as to make him love it, but those that are interested in it. It is one thing to receive it the letter of it, and another thing to receive it in the love of it. There are some in our day, plenty in the country and plenty in London, in one sermon you would think they are so in love with this great truth of eternal election that it was revealed to them with as much power as it was to Saul of Tarsus, "The God of our fathers has chosen you;" and yet in the next sermon, or in the same sermon, there is a great noise inviting all to come; all which is delusion.

If you possess electing grace by the Spirit of God, you will possess it in the love of it, and you will see that you could not have any one gospel blessing without it; for we are blessed with all spiritual blessings according as he has chosen us in Christ Jesus. Well, but, you say, the Bible does not say, "Believe in election, and be saved;" it says "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved." But you cannot believe in Christ unless you believe in God's testimony concerning him. It is

impossible for you to believe in Christ and yet not believe in the testimony God gives concerning him. And has not God said that his people are chosen in him from the foundation of the world? Has not God declared that the election has obtained it, and that they have obtained it by the covenant head, even while they were dead in trespasses and sin? "The thing that is hid brings forth to light." The person of Christ, how suited he is to the great ends to be answered! eternal election received in the love of it, in the life of it; and such will abide by it. And so, of the rest of the great truths of the gospel, regeneration, final perseverance and all the rest; but upon these I will not enlarge. Thus, then the Lord reveals to his people the person of Christ and the order of salvation by him. Now I hope to have one of these mornings, a whole sermon upon that one thought, the order of salvation. If you are out of order you are out of the gospel and if you are out of the gospel you are out of the grace of God and if you are out of the grace of God you are out of the Christ of God and if you are out of the Christ of God you are out of the kingdom of God and if you are out of the kingdom of God you will be out of the heaven of God and if you are out of the heaven of God you must be forever in the wrath of God. Now, then, this revelation "The thing that is hid brings he forth to light." "he binds the floods from overflowing." The flood of error would roll in and keep us unacquainted with the person and work of Christ, keep us unacquainted with electing grace; but he binds these floods of error that they shall not be able to carry away the woman, the Lamb's bride. The floods of error that Satan casts out of his mouth, mere professors receive those floods and become mighty people by them. Not so the saints of God. They shall stand fast by the person and work of Christ, and the order of his mediation.

But it also means timely revelation. Now if you thus know the person and work of Christ and the order of his mediation, for it is according to the order of grace from first to last, the new covenant, then there is timely revelation. There is the flood coming and that was hid; but the Lord brought it forth to light to Noah. It was so revealed to him; he was so persuaded of it that he was moved with fear, and then the Lord revealed to him the way of escape; and he worked hard, for how many years I do not know; but he kept at work. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The old hypocritical cry, take no notice of it, "These high doctrines don't make people work, don't have a good effect." I know they do not, upon mere professors; but because the dunghill makes an ugly response to the sun, does it follow that the rose and the lily produce the disagreeable effect? The fault is not in the sun, but in the dunghill. And so, it was in all ages. When the prophets set forth these truths, men were enraged; and therefore, because these truths did not lead them to good works, they concluded they did not lead anybody else to them. Why, it kept Noah at work. Suppose you had gone to Noah, and said, "Noah, you have found grace; it is all of grace; you have no occasion to work." "Ah," he says, "it is grace makes me work. It was grace that made me see the flood, and I saw the ark." A good architect can always see the end of a building before a stone is laid as clearly as after the whole is finished. So, the Lord revealed to Noah the plan of the ark, and Noah saw the flood, saw the ark building, saw just what it was, and he abode by it and worked, because grace made him work, until he finished the whole. Timely revelation. So, everything you and I have on earth, the very globe itself, must be overwhelmed, not with water indeed, but with fire; but the Lord has warned us in time, moved us with fear in time, moved us to Christ as the refuge; and ever since we were moved, we have been, by faith in what Christ has done, laboring, to make rest? No; but laboring to enter into rest. And so, we do sometimes enter into rest; then we get disturbed again, upset again; then we pray and look to the Lord; then he gives us rest for a little again and again. So, it is grace that makes us work. I need not remind you; the cities of the plain; how the Lord revealed the thing that was hidden there: need not remind you of the Egyptians. Oh,

how different Moses and Pharaoh! On what different grounds those two men stood! Who placed Moses where he was? Why, the great God himself, how came Moses to be the proper child? Because the Lord chose that he should be so. And how came Moses to be called to his great mission? Because the Lord was pleased to call him. And what was it that rendered Moses so effectual in executing that mission? The presence and power of the blessed God. Here was Pharaoh. He did not know what there was in that cloud, any more than the natural man knows what kind of a covenant God we have in the Bible. Therefore, Pharaoh goes blindly on; thinks he is going to do something. But Moses knew what there was in the cloud; he knew who it was in the cloud; he knew there was not anything too hard for the Lord. And what a solemn and yet delightful moment that must have been when the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your rod over the sea;" and to see the sea, there about seven miles wide, as near as we can gather, part hither and thither, form itself on the right and on the left into crystal walls, and the light to shine upon the path, the path to be dry! And every one's physical infirmity that instant left him. There was not a feeble person among them. No; they all went on as happily and as merrily and as comfortably as possible. Why, Pharaoh would naturally think, "Parcel of fools! how is that old woman to get on? She can't go far. And how is that poor little child, and how is that poor old man? I know they have a great many lame and infirm among them, and I shall be able to master them all, because the strong ones will have to take care of the weak ones, and while they are doing that I will come and destroy them." Ah, Master Pharaoh, they have strength from quarters you know not; they will be strengthened in a way you know not. Oh, how mysterious! I thank God for that scripture. It certainly cuts the ground completely from under Bishop Colenso's infidelity. "How," he says, "could they get through?" How indeed? "Not a feeble person among them." Bless the Lord, what is it makes us strong spiritually? The Lord's presence: when we can see his salvation; when we can see a way is made for us to escape the evil, and the evils you have seen today you shall see no more forever. "The thing that is hid brings he forth to light." Now, then, the Lord has revealed to us clearly, not only the Person and work of Christ, the order of his mediation, but he has revealed to us the coming judgment, he has revealed to us the way of escape; into that way we are brought. Some of us, happily, know that the Lord can strengthen us, as to make us feel that our troubles are as nothing. It is when the Lord hides his face and we are left somewhat to ourselves, then our troubles are heavy; but when he comes, why, we can take up the gates of Gaza, posts, bar, and all, carry them for more twenty miles, fling them at the top of the mount opposite Hebron, laugh at the attempts of our mightiest foes, and rejoice in the great secret that we thus go forth in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness even of his only.

Now my text says, "Then did he see it." I hope you will not think me more spiritually minded than I am when I say but I cannot help it; I have been so accustomed of late to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the stupendous framework of the gospel, the little puddling gospels of the day that men preach, they do appear to me so contemptible; I hate them with increasing hatred, and I do not even want to take up time thinking or talking about them. There is something so magnificent, so satisfying, and so delightful in this gospel of the blessed God. that there our souls can rest, and triumph, and rejoice forever. The Lord from eternity saw this would just suit us. The text says, "Then did he see it and declare it." the margin says, "and number it;" I like that better. He numbered all the people; he numbered all their sins and imputed them to Christ; he numbered all their circumstances, and too strict account of everything that should attend them through the wilderness of this world. Here, then, "the thing that is hid brings he forth to light;" But time would fail me to dwell upon this part of the Lord's mercy. See how Nebuchadnezzar's dream was hidden from the

magician; see how it was brought to light to Daniel. That 2nd of Daniel is enough to charm any one's soul, that it is; to see the kingdoms of this world all become chaff, and the wind carry them away, like the chaff of the summer threshing floor; and to see the substitutional stone, Christ Jesus, still remain, the kingdoms of this world vanish, but his kingdom remains. His dominion an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. The resurrection of Christ, and a thousand other things which were hidden from our eyes, now the Lord brings to light.

He so limits the floods of error, and the doings of the adversary, that the thing that is hid brings he forth to light, that is, Christ, and the truths the gospel, timely warning. Will he not bring the sins of the people to light? Yes, so that they themselves shall see them, but not in judgment, not bring them to light then. No; some people, not any of you, I should hope; if it should be so I hope the Lord will deliver you from the delusion, some divines have held that there will be a kind of revelation of the personal character, at the last, of all the people of God; just to see how many faults they had before they were called by grace, and how many after. And so, one Pharisee, not a law Pharisee, most of them are gospel Pharisees now-a-days, one Pharisee said, "How nice I shall appear in comparison with brother A, and brother B, and brother C!" through the alphabet, or more than that, if they could find the letters. "How nice I shall look!" Do you think the Lord is going to gratify your pride at the last great day like that? You could not hold a more abominable sentiment than that. Have you been preserved? Thank God for it! but recollect, while you have thus been preserved, you have the same innumerable evils in your nature as the worst character that ever lived. But what says the word of God? "The sins of Israel and of Judah shall be sought for, but they shall not be found. Behold, I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins." That is the one thing he will not bring to light. When the two tribes and a half; the tribe of Reuben, and the tribe of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, in solemn oath bound themselves to go over with the nine tribes and a half into Canaan, and not to rest until the other tribes had gained their inheritance, Moses said, "If you do at all fail, be sure your sin will find you out;" that is, if they had apostatized from that oath to go on till the victory was complete, if they had apostatized from that, their sin would find them out. And so, you, if you apostatized from God's truth, that's a sin that would find you out, because it would prove that you were not a real child of God. If you apostatize from God's truth you apostatize from the only thing that can cover your sin, and that is the only thing that could find you out. There shall be none. "I will pardon those whom I reserve." But do as Judas did, or Ananias and Sapphira did, apostatize from God's truth, and sell his truth, and part with it, then you part with the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered. So, then that is the thing that is hidden, which he will not bring to light. They are brought to light enough in their own consciences here; they are tormented with them enough here, and they have no desire to see their tormentors any more, and the Lord will take care they shall not. I make these remarks in my usual plain, decided sort of way, yes, you do not wish me to fear men, do you? We must be faithful in these matters, "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered;" that is that the Lord will not bring to light. How sweet the thought! Lay my head down, and die; sweet faith in Jesus, not a fault laid to my charge. "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you." At the judgment day not a cloud will hover over my head; not a spot, not a fault, not an adversary, not an evil; my sin put away by the Father, put away by the Savior, put away testimonially by the Holy Ghost, put away and gone forever. It will indeed be:

"A sweet exalted song

Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting Grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the top stone rise.”

So that he will bring all that to light that shall be for the salvation of his people; their faults are cast behind his back in the depths of the sea never to come to light again.

Secondly, I notice *the surpassing value of this wisdom*, “It cannot be gotten for gold.” It here says gold, silver, precious stones; all the wealth that the gold, silver, precious stones, that the whole globe contains, can be made to represent, this wisdom surpassed it all; because none of these things can minister towards our deliverance, towards reconciling us to God, or towards helping us to heaven. “The price of wisdom is above rubies.” Now let us poor people have a word upon this. “God has chosen the poor of this world rich in faith.” Ah, says one, my brother So-and-so, everything he touches turns to gold; whereas everything I touch turns to dust. I cannot get on I am a poor thing altogether. Well, let us look at it. You know Jesus Christ? Yes. And his work? Yes. And the order of his mercy? Yes. And you see the coming judgment? Yes. And the coming glory? Yes. And you love his truth? Yes. And he is dearer to you than mortal life? Yes. Well, then, never mind the other. Hear you the apostle upon his estimation of things; “For whom I have suffered”, that is, for Jesus Christ, “the loss of all things,” all his academical honors, all his rank, good name, and fame. For Saul would have been a great character in the world; he was none of your namby-pamby, if you wish it, shilly-shally, creep-mouse characters. Naturally energetic, if he set about anything it would be with all his might, whether it was good or bad. Now he would have done well in the world. “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things,” the honors I could have acquired, and I count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; counting all things but dross in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.” Therefore, what can equal it in value? In its right-hand length of days; in the left-hand riches and honor. Happy is every one that retains this gospel tree of life.

But, third, *the defeat of the adversary*. “Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.” That represents Satan, of course, the destroyer; and death, the means by which he destroys, the power of death. “We have heard the fame thereof.” Satan knows he is cast out. That scripture in the book of Revelation, what a blessed scripture is that! I should have no hope but for such a scripture as that; why, Satan would hold me and cut me off; I should not be able to stand against him, nor stand before him; he would turn my sins into manacles, and bind me hand and foot. But “they overcame him” by three things. What stands first? That which ought to stand first, the atonement of Christ. “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.” And what was their testimony? Why the sufficiency of that atonement. Their testimony was that Christ was able to save to the uttermost all that came unto God by him. “And they loved not their lives unto the death.” There was a love to the truth. I thought this morning, going through several parts of the New Testament early this morning, I quite shuddered when I came to the parts where they smote the dear Savior, and where they platted a crown of thorns and the way they spoke of him. I thought, What an awful thing! oh, what an awful thing! Presently I got a little farther on, where Mary Magdalene and the other honorable women came to the sepulcher, and I felt so happy; I thought, This is my company. And oh, how rejoiced they were to see the Savior again! and when he reappeared to his disciples how happy they were! Ah, I thought, this is my company, the company of those that love him. I feel I am not at home with the others, for I could not smite him,

nor mock him, nor crucify him; no, but I do feel at home with those that love him; with the woman that washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. I am at home with all the dear people of God, with those that love the truth and abide by it. So, my hearer, lay hold of Jesus atonement, the word of his testimony, the work is finished, and then see that the truth is dear to you, too dear to be parted with, and then you are a believer. There must be these three; you must have the victory of Christ, you must have the testimony of his word, and you must have the love of the truth, for all are to be condemned that have not the love of the truth.

But, passing by many things, I come to *the skillful management of the Most High*. “Whence then comes wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?” See with what emphasis it is repeated, “God understands the way thereof.” Christ is the way thereof, and there was always a good understanding between Christ and God. There is only a partial good understanding between God and you now, but I do confess I am judging you by myself. Some of his dealings with me I complain a good deal about, and quarrel with the Lord about. That is for want of a good understanding of things. Many quarrels among creatures arise from the want of a good understanding. Now there was always a good understanding between God and Christ; they always understood each other well. “And he knows the place thereof.” Christ is the place thereof, for in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. “For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven;” and he, in seeing under the whole heaven, scanning the whole earth, saw little Bethlehem, little tiny Bethlehem, on a declivity of a hill, a few miles to the south of Jerusalem, and he brought the prophet into that vision, and the prophet saw it, and said, “And you, Bethlehem, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth him that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from everlasting.” Here is the little spot; he saw under the whole heaven, and saw little Bethlehem. Eight hundred years before the Savior came that was recorded. The Lord never altered his mind; did not change with the age, no. He saw the spot of Calvary's cross; he recognized all his dear Son should endure; he saw the garden, saw the new sepulcher, saw his servant, Joseph of Arimathea saw the whole of it. “Then did he see it, and number it; he prepared it, yes, and searched it out.” If I may use an anthropomorphism, speaking after the manner of men, what trouble the blessed God took for us, to arrange everything, to choose the spot, to choose the place, everything! he saw the sepulcher, saw his dear Son rise from the dead, all laid open to his immense survey. Now, then, Jesus is born, you say; then just see how it goes on afterwards, that now the Lord has nicely to balance circumstances during Christ's life. “To make the weight for the winds.” There were conflicting winds, adverse winds.