

HAPPY DESTINY

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning June 17th, 1866

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Wansley Street

Volume 8 Number 395

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” Isaiah 53:12

IN addition to the reasons in the previous part of the chapter assigned for this destiny of the Savior, there are four more reasons given in the latter part of this same verse, and each reason that is here given is unto Christians, when understood, an intense endearment. “He poured out his soul unto death.” When contemplating this, that he gave himself up entirely for us, even unto death, making himself a living sacrifice in body and in soul, acceptable and well pleasing unto God, this, looked at in its substitutional character, is one of the great endearments of the gospel, endearing unto us the Lord our God, and bringing a peace into the heart and soul that nothing else can. The second assigned is that “he was numbered with the transgressors.” This must be understood not in the mere circumstantial and temporary sense, as when he was crucified between two thieves; we must understand his being numbered with the transgressors in a deeper, a higher, and a stronger sense than this. We must take that scripture in the 2nd of the Hebrews to explain what is meant by his being numbered with the transgressors, that “he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” And the seed of Abraham in their state by nature are transgressors, the same as all others are, and Jesus Christ was so numbered with them that their transgressions became his. As Adam the first was so numbered with us, and we were so numbered with him, that his transgressions became ours, so Jesus Christ was so numbered with us that our transgressions became his, and we are so numbered with him that his righteousness becomes ours, and by this oneness with this wonderful Person transgression, the worst of all things, is forever destroyed. And not only so, but “he bore the sin of many.” You see that while each clause is upon the same subject, yet each clause presents something new concerning the same subject. Here is, first, a devotion to God; then here is oneness with the people; then here is his almighty strength in bearing the iniquities of his people; and then the last clause represents him in his final interest in these things, “And he made intercession for the transgressors.” As he did not in his humiliation stop short of anything needful to be done for the salvation of sinners, so he does not in his exaltation stop short of anything needful to be done for the salvation of sinners. He is as much a Savior in his exaltation as he was in his humiliation, as the apostle, in the 5th of the Romans, argues, that if by the death of Christ, we are thus reconciled to God, much more shall we be saved by his life. So that he was born to save, and he lived to save, and he died to save, and he rose to save, and he ascended to

save, and he intercedes at God's right hand to save, and he governs to save, and he will appear at the last great day to carry out in ultimate perfection the great end for which he appeared. So that, taking the whole of the transactions of mercy, they are all embodied in that described by the same apostle when he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I am sure there was a great depth of spiritual understanding, of wisdom and propriety in the apostle's desire, when he desired to know more of Christ: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death," because there everything is settled, everything is arranged, everything is pleasant, everything delightful, as delightful as infinite wisdom could make it or the believer need, and it is delightful in a way that accords with the glory of him who is God over all, blessed for evermore.

Now, then, our text lies before us in two distinct clauses. Here is, first, *the Savior associated with a certain order of being*, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great Secondly, *we have him in his conflict and victory*, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong."

First, angels. Angels are great in dignity, and Jesus Christ's portion is with angels. They are associated with him, and, as you know, have shown their interest in these eternal matters by the several ways in which, from time to time, they have appeared in connection with the progress of the gospel. And there are several analogies between the Savior and angels. Angels are holy; so is the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels are chosen of God; they are called elect angels; so is the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels excel in strength; so, does the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels are entirely approved by the great God; so is the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels rejoice in the repentance of a poor sinner, and so does the Savior; he, being exalted to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel, also rejoice therein. Angels always dwell in the presence of God, and so does the Lord Jesus Christ. And all their blessedness arises from God, especially from that manifestation of him brought about by the eternal salvation of men; as said the apostle, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Thus, then, the angels are great in dignity, glory, and standing; and Christ has his portion with them. I think it will be profitable as we go along to endeavor to point out the contrast. Who shall undertake to point out the contrast between an unfallen angel and a fallen angel? Here, I may say, is another analogy between the angels and Christ. The angels never fell, nor did the Savior. The angels never can fall, nor can the Savior. Only, of course, for very different reasons. They cannot fall because God has secured them; but the Savior cannot fall because of his own inherent worth, yes, because he is God as well as man. Now, then, the contrast to this is that of fallen angels. We can form but little idea of what a fallen angel is in his character. Filled with fearful enmity against God; filled with all murderous and mischievous purposes; filled with all blasphemy; filled with everything that is vile, and at the same time buried, as it were, in that lake that burns with fire and brimstone. How dreadful, then, is their portion! Now, then, the dear Savior was not to come to this privation; he was as Mediator, by his mediatorial work, to rise from this privation, and to have his portion with angelic hosts. We read of their surrounding the throne and joining in the hallelujahs of the saints. Second, his portion is also with the saints. And they are great in dignity, and glorious both in their constitution, constituted like him, and in their destiny. First, then, the saints of God are called kings. Why are they called kings? Because they reign over every adverse power. But then they are said to be kings unto God. Now we take sin, to begin with; that has reigned over us unto dead, and still dwells in us. But there stands the declaration that "sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace." If you put the Christian under the law, the

law is the strength of sin, and the Christian has nothing there wherewith to overcome sin. But put the Christian under grace and bring him into possession of that victory of the dear Savior that pardons sin, and that puts sin down, bring the Christian into possession of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that meets the law, puts sin, and Satan, and condemnation, and death down; here the Christian stands upon this victory ground, and he always has the victory in Christ Jesus. And especially does his reign as a king appear here, in those delightful truths concerning their stability. For sin so reigned over us in the first Adam as to separate us from all we had by creation. God's paternal character by the fall of man became lost in the judicial character; so that he ceased in the sympathetic, he ceased in the kindly, he ceased in the communicative and associative way to be a Father and became our Judge. "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" But there the paternal character is lost in the judicial; and if we die in our sins, we meet him as a sin-avenging God; if we die in our sins we meet God on the ground of those threatening's that are recorded in the Bible; and there we can have no victory, there sin has overcome us, there sin has destroyed us, there all is ruined. But here, in Christ Jesus, where the ransom comes in, and brings me into the love of God, I can never be severed from that love. Let the righteousness of Jesus Christ be brought in that unites me to God in a sworn covenant. "I spread my skirt over you" alluding to that protection under which he takes us, and alluding, I should think, as well to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and I entered into a covenant with you, and you became mine." When once thus brought into the love of God by the work of Christ, brought into the bond of the covenant by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, here Christ's work and divine immutability become our security; here we reign as kings. And each Christian, notwithstanding the faults that occasionally overtake him by the way, and notwithstanding the infirmities with which every Christian feels himself to be compassed, each Christian will, by faith in the blood of the Lamb, by faith in the righteousness of Christ, by faith in the immutable oath of God, God's immutable counsel, his yea and amen promise, each Christian will at the last successfully and triumphantly say, "O my soul, you have trodden down strength." They are kings unto God, because they derive their royalty from God; they derive their kingdom, their throne, their power, their dominion over everything from God. Thus, then, Christ's portion is divided with this great people; they are all kings, a kingdom of kings. Again, not less is the character. Now under the law the priest was God's prime minister. Jesus Christ is the King; the people in oneness with him are kings. He is the Priest, and they in oneness with him are priests. They are priests in holiness. Aaron and his sons were washed at the door of the tabernacle, as a figure of poor sinners being washed in the blood of the Lamb, and they were arrayed in that raiment which was divinely contrived and divinely provided; there was nothing of any human wisdom or contrivance in it; the whole of it was the work of the Lord. Well, now, the special character of the priests was access to God, communion with God, walking with God. So, Jesus Christ in Malachi is set forth as walking with God in peace and in equity. And if I can convey the idea, I am afraid I shall not clearly, Jesus Christ is a Priest of the order of Melchizedek; there is in his priesthood eternal perfection, and he did and does by his own protection walk with God and enjoy that perfection of familiarity with God in which he has fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. So, we are made priests by this perfect offering. And you are to look for God's Spirit, and blessing, and mercy, and grace, you are to look for the whole of it simply and entirely by faith in the perfection of Christ's priesthood. You cannot walk with God by any worth or worthiness of your own. If you offer up spiritual sacrifices, if they be prayer, it must ascend by the perfection of Christ; if they be praise it must be by Jesus Christ; if they be love, it must be by Jesus Christ; and whatever service is rendered, if it be not by faith in and love to Jesus Christ, then it is not acceptable. Thus, then, his portion is with the great. They are made great in

dignity as kings, and they are made great in dignity as priests. There is something in holiness, the name of it makes us lament the more that it is so abused, and that it is applied where just the opposite term ought to be applied. When that poor deluded creature at Rome is called "His Holiness," and when the term is applied in a variety of ways to men evidently destitute of the grace of God, we lament the prostitution of so sacred a term. Or else the very word itself is dear to the Christian's heart. He thinks to himself, By the blood of the Lamb I am to become holy, by the Spirit of God I shall be holy, by the truth of God I shall be holy, by the immutable oath of God I shall be holy. Holiness is on my side; holiness comes and swallows up all my unholiness, so that I may well give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, because he himself is my sanctification. Thus, then, Christians are priests; they walk with God by faith in the perfection of Christ. He will not say no to you; no, bless his holy name, if you feel what a poor creature you are, then the more acceptable will be the way of access to God. Hear what the apostle says upon this question of access to God. "We have boldness by the blood of Jesus." And the apostle does not make any exception to this; he says, "we," meaning all the people of God. He does not say: Now for myself I have labored more abundantly than them all, and therefore by my abundant labors I have boldness of access to God. I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy; I am therefore so zealous, and so loving, and so devoted, that by my devotedness I have boldness of access to God. No, the apostle would not so speak. He knew if he were anything more than nature made him, it was by the grace of God, and he is careful to say, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Therefore, he makes no exception when he says, "By the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holy of holies." The Lord give us, then, more of this reigning grace, and more of this grace of fellowship with him. For there is a greatness in this divine royalty; there is a greatness, and a grandeur, and a dignity in this holiness, that nothing else can equal.

But again; not only are they kings and priests unto God, but I have something greater to say yet, greater than either, in order to carry out the idea that his portion is with the great. They are not only kings and priests to God, and never to be severed from the love of God, or from the service of God, for his servants shall serve him forever, but they are also *sons of God*. Is there not a greatness in this? They are "sons of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." Now Jesus Christ was heir of all things as the Son of God; and apart from his obedience and sacrifice he was heir of all things; but by that obedience and by that sacrifice he has placed the right of his brethren to eternal life, and eternal inheritance, and eternal glory, on the same ground that he himself stands. He ever stood, and he stands now, on his personal worth, and into his life he threw his personal worth, nothing else could do; and into his death he threw his personal worth. He gave himself. That is a great scripture, that "he gave himself for the church." "He gave himself," said the apostle; he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He threw his personal worth into it. So that you have all the personal worth of Christ in his obedience and his death, placing the legal right of his people upon the same ground as his own. He was the son of God, heir of all things; they are constituted heirs of all things. But then they are under the law, and there must be something to bring them out; they are under sin, there must be something to bring them out; they are under death, there must be something to bring them out; they are under darkness, there must be something to bring them out; for although they are thus constituted heirs of all things, they cannot come out from the bondage they are in to possess that inheritance, if they come to any knowledge of it, unless there is something to bring them out. So, the Savior's work is set forth as bringing them out. Hence, "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion." Thus, then, his portion is with angels, unfallen angels, not with fallen angels; his portion is with his people, for they

themselves are his portion in that respect, and not with the lost. What shall I say to this? I hardly know what to say; cannot say what I want to say, that the Savior took, shall I say from eternity, for his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting, he took a standing with the saints, with those that God had loved and chosen, constituted heirs of eternal glory. He never forfeited a single thing, not one. No; he could range through the Scriptures when he was here below, and I say it with reverence, and at the same time with gladness, that he could not find a single scripture concerning him all through the Old Testament that he had not conformed to; he could not find a single prediction that he himself had not fulfilled. He maintained his standing through the Old Testament, maintained his standing here below, maintained his standing in death, maintains his standing now. Bless his holy name! his portion is still with his people, and as he can never be severed from them, they can never be severed from him.

Then, thirdly, with God. This, of course, is that that gives greatness to the whole. "I will divide him a portion with the great." "My Father," said Christ, "is greater than I." And when he spoke of going away, sorrow filled their hearts; but he said, "If you loved me," that is, if they loved him in that respect, and the reason they did not love him in that respect was because they did not understand him in that respect; for in those respects in which we do not understand him, and if there seem something against our views, we cannot love him. Now he says, "If you loved me," that is, if they loved him, as I have said, in that respect, "you would rejoice because I said, I go to my Father; for my Father is greater than I." Why, some people seem afraid to dwell upon the Sonship of Christ; that while the Savior is equal with the Father, they seem afraid to dwell upon the respects in which he was not equal with the Father, but in which the Father was greater than he. For myself, I must say I rather rejoice in this. Now just take this view of it. Jesus Christ took the seed of Abraham. Where does he take them to? Why, to that that answers to his own work. "Father, I will that those whom you have given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Now Jesus Christ takes his people up into all the greatness of God. You may bring forward any of the perfections of God, his self-existence, infinity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, all the perfections of the most high God; Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, went into all the greatness of God, and that is where he brings his people to. So that his portion is in all the greatness of the blessed God. I say it with delight, was going to say with reverence too, that the portion could not be greater. "I will divide him a portion with the great." Unfallen angels and saints of God carried up into the greatness of the everlasting God. The 16th Psalm is very beautiful upon this: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; you maintain my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." And Jesus Christ will complete this scene in the way described by the apostle; he says of this wonderful Person that "he shall deliver up the kingdom unto the Father, and God shall be all and in all."

What, then, is the contrast to this? It is awful to the last degree. Time goes away very fast; a few years, and not one of us shall be on this side of the grave; yes, in a very few years every one of us must be in the scorpion folds of the devil, shut up in the prison of hell, sinking into the bottomless pit, darkness that must be felt to eternity; nothing heard nor witnessed in that region but the thunders and lightnings of almighty and eternal wrath; a very few years, and we must be there if we live and die unacquainted with this Jesus Christ. But if, on the other hand, we are brought to receive him, and to reign by him, and to have access to God by him, and to receive him as the Son of God, for "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that sees the Son" sees him as the Son of God, bringing us up out of what we are, and taking us up out of the dust into the greatness

of God, “and believes on him, may have everlasting life;” then in a very few years we shall help to adorn the plains of heaven; in a very few years we shall be disembodied, un-imprisoned, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The greatness, then, of our knowledge, it shall be perfect, the greatness of our joy, the greatness of our pleasure, the greatness of our victory, the greatness of our blessedness. Why, an empire on earth must to the saints in heaven appear a passing toy, a mere vapor; and those things that appear mountains now will indeed then appear molehills; and those things that almost break our hearts now we shall laugh at then, because “he that sits in the heavens shall laugh;” and the things that make us tremble now will be a source of triumph then. The Lord shall so gild every cloud as to make us see that all things have worked for good, and that those afflictions that were grievous, very grievous, heart-rending grievous at the time, turned out at the last to be in their end but light afflictions, working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Oh, then, in which path are we this morning? Have we some hope that we are escaping the portion of fallen angels, and that we shall be with the angels of God; that we are escaping the portion of the lost, and that we shall be not with them, but with the saints; and that we are escaping the ravages of that old dragon that would have delighted to get us under his tyrannical power, making up his savage pleasure in the ruin of immortal souls, and rendering increasingly miserable those whom he gets in his power; have we some hope that we shall escape this fearful destiny, and that we do know something of God, something of Christ, something of his salvation, of his mercy, and of his love? If so, then this clause in our text infinitely concerns us: “I will divide him a portion with the great.” This, then, is the order of Christ’s destiny, and this is the order of the destiny of all that are on his side.

I hasten now to the next part, “*And he shall divide the spoil with the strong.*” There may be perhaps, and I should think there are, two things meant here. I should think the spoil here might mean, it is a little questionable whether that be the meaning, but if it be not, it is the truth, the spoil here may perhaps mean the whole human race, and that they are the spoil of Satan, that he has got them into his hands. And if Christ is to divide the spoil with the strong, then it means that he will find out those that are his, and that he will take that part of the human race to himself that God has given him, as it is written that he should “give eternal life to as many as you have given him.” He shall take the spoil, divide the spoil with the strong. You are aware that Satan is by the Savior himself, perhaps in some allusion to this text, called a strong man; that “when the strong man keeps his house, his goods are in peace.” And so, it is with us when we were in a state of nature; we were quite content to be without Christ, without God, and without hope, and without grace, and to be without prayer, and to be without any true acquaintance with eternal things. But the Savior says, when a stronger than he shall come, and shall bind this strongman, then he spoils his goods. Now if the work of grace has begun in our hearts, and the Lord has begun to take us from Satan, in the scripture I have just quoted you get a description of the work; “shall spoil his goods.” Now if you find out what Satan’s goods are you can then ask yourself the question whether in the palace of your soul those goods are spoiled, and whether another kind, shall I say of furniture, is brought into the place of that. What are the goods of Satan? I will mention two or three. The first is that of darkness; because he knows that when once a sinner sees the sinfulness of sin, the majesty of God’s law, and recognizes the certainty of God’s threatening’s, that man begins to be uneasy. And when the Lord goes a little further and commands the light to shine into that man’s heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, Well, says Satan, I reckoned very much upon that part of my goods, that darkness. Now the darkness is gone, it is spoiled. You can live no longer blind, hence literally in olden time, all those questions seem to press upon us this work of

God spiritually; when the Lord opened the eyes of the blind man, they asked the man, What did he do? How opened he your eyes? Give God the glory, for this preacher is a sinner. I am sorry you were blessed under him because no one likes him, everybody speaks against him; and therefore, this preacher that has opened your eyes, it is a great pity that somebody else had not opened your eyes, if you must have them opened. Give God the glory; this man is a sinner. Well, whether he is a sinner or not I do not know; but this I know, he has opened my eyes. Well, what did he do? I told you once; will you be his disciples? Not for all the world. And I would not be otherwise for all the world. Well, then they went and asked his parents, and they were afraid to answer. So, these Pharisees returned to the man again. Well, he said, I was blind, and now I see, you cannot beat me out of that. Then they cast him out, and the Son of God found him out, and said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered, and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen him, and it is he that talked with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him," and followed him, and the man is now in heaven. "He shall divide the spoil with the strong?" Enmity is another piece of Satan's goods. Oh, those dangerous high doctrines! Enmity, go wherever you may, against the truth as it is in Jesus. And the Lord has a variety of ways of testing people's love to his truth. The Lord could have raised up and sent forth ministers of high education and of aristocratic standing in the world; men who should by their eloquence, learning, fascination, rank, and standing in the world, command attention. But instead of this he generally sends just the reverse, and so when he chose twelve poor men (it is true one of them was Judas), why, his friends said, He is beside himself, to make parsons of such poor men as they are, uneducated. Why, what in the world will they do? The world will not receive them. If he is going to do anything, he ought to have some men of rank, standing, education, and of some importance. But no. Paul, who had more natural advantages than any other of the apostles, nevertheless said, "I came not in wisdom of words, but in demonstration of the Spirit." And this is one of the tests the Lord puts his people to. Hence it is that when your enmity is slain, and you are brought to know the truth, you tell someone what minister you have heard: Well, I am surprised. What! go and hear such a man as that! Why, he has not been to college; he is not this, and that, and the other. Such is the world's judgment. What is this? Why, it is one of the tests the Lord puts his people to, that they may not follow the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of God; that they may not seek the wisdom of words, but the power and the presence of God. I do not mean here to advocate ignorance, nor to say a word against education. The more we are educated, and the more a minister knows, and the better he can speak, all the better. Still, at the same time, the influence that brings any good to the soul, any glory to God, must be of a spiritual kind. Now, then, darkness and enmity are two pieces of Satan's goods, and the Savior spoils both these, shines the darkness away by the brightness of his coming, slays the enmity, brings us into reconciliation to God by him, and thus Satan is so far spoiled. I need not remind you of the love of the world, unbelief, carnality, all the evils of nature. We will exclude none; they are all the goods of the strong man. Now when Christ comes, he spoils the whole, and that man becomes spoiled for the world, spoiled for the Pharisee, spoiled for the law, spoiled for everything but that for which he is fitted. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." We see instances in the word of God of the Savior dividing the spoil with the strong. Here is the spoil, and two opposite persons contending for the possession of that spoil. It is a beautiful representation; it shows the helplessness of the spoil, and it is our mercy that the Lord is indeed the stronger of the two. Here stands Joshua, and Satan, the strong man, at his right hand to resist him. Joshua was helpless; there he stood before the angel. But the goods of Satan were already spoiled; Joshua was brought into the light, saw the way of mercy, his enmity was slain, and he was brought into reconciliation, though he had not yet

realized in his own soul the mercy of the Lord. The Lord steps in; "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you; is not this a brand plucked from the burning?" Indeed, we may run, for that matter, all through the Scriptures, and see how the Bible sets this forth, that wherever the Savior comes he is sure to gain the victory; he will have his own. Here, again, I wish to speak with great care, for the doctrine of preterition, as we call it, by way of softness, though it is in reality reprobation, I mean that of some being lost, is a doctrine that has rested on my mind very much lately. There is something so frightful, something so terrible, in being one of those characters described in the 9th of Romans, and which by nature we all are. Oh, it is such an infinite mercy to have a feeling towards God, to have a desire towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and to feel that we are spoiled for everything short of him. Hell is hidden from us; the judgments of God are hidden from us, except in so far as they are shadowed forth in the Bible; the sufferings of the lost are hidden from us; and we are so wrapped up in this life that we have no fear, no dread, no concern; we live as though we could smile at the damnation of the soul; I mean while we are in a state of nature. And even when brought, as I trust most of you are, to know the truth as it is in Jesus, oh, how much hardness of heart there is! I am really half ashamed to confess it, but I am really glad myself sometimes when anything pertaining to the destiny of my soul, so stirs up my mind as at all to solemnize it, and to lead me to search into my own standing, and to lead me to solemn prayer to God for clearer evidences of interest in him; for really I seem such a poor destitute creature, and nothing but the richest grace and mercy of Christ can save me. I just feel as the apostle said, "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." Ministers preach, and we think they are all just what they appear to be. Perhaps very few of them preach out many of their inward trials, castings down, and darkness. And, paradoxical as it may seem, these are the very experiences that ultimately endear the Lord Jesus Christ. I can this morning say, in the presence of this assembly, that my objection to those gospels that I do not believe in is free from all prejudice against any party or any man whatever. I can truly say that my reason, as far as my feelings are concerned, is that such gospels are not of the slightest use to me. You might just as well tell me to create a world as tell me to come to Christ. You might just as well tell me to annihilate the globe as to bring my soul into fellowship with God. And as to telling me to take the promise, you might as well tell me to take one of the mightiest planets of the universe and run away with it on my shoulders.