

A GOOD PRINCE

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning October 20th, 1867

by Mister JAMES WELLS

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET

Volume 9 Number 467

“He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.” Daniel 8:25

THIS is a text that calls our attention to the four ancient empires, and the circumstances connected with the people of God in the various operations and doings of those empires. Hence, we find a certain power which was formed in the East, and that power increased and increased, and organized itself into a power of hostility against the Lord Jesus Christ, and that power crucified Jesus Christ, and followed up that crucifixion with persecution, and followed that up, as you are aware, for several centuries. Now what power was this? No one can be at a loss to know under what secular power the Savior was crucified, and his apostles and followers persecuted, and thousands upon thousands put to death. Everybody knows that it was Rome pagan. Hence, we find in the preceding chapter Rome pagan in its commencement in the East is called a little horn. The Roman Empire being made up of many kingdoms, is called ten kingdoms, that is, a definite for an indefinite number. For all those learned men that have tried to point out the ten kingdoms which they suppose are here meant have failed. Their explanation does not at all accord with the details given of the circumstances connected with the people of God, and of the doings of the enemy. But if we take it as we ought to take it, the ten kingdoms to mean a definite for an indefinite number, then we shall not be at a loss to know what this little horn is, and we shall not be at a loss to know what the three horns were that this little horn plucked up by the roots. For everybody knows that the empire of Alexander the Great at his death was divided into four parts, and that when the Roman power rose in the East it absorbed one of those and then plucked up the other three, as it were, by the roots. And this same little horn waxed exceeding great towards the east, that is, towards Asia, into which the Roman empire extended, and towards the south, that is, towards Northern Africa, or Egypt, and towards the pleasant land, that is, towards the land of Canaan. There you get the origin, the rise, the progress, the work, of the little horn. And it is to my mind surprising that there should be two opinions as to what this little horn is, historically speaking. It does not refer to the Pope of Rome historically; but it does refer to that system mystically or figuratively; for as there was a literal Babylon, so there is a mystical Babylon; and as there was a literal Jezebel that delighted in the blood of the saints, so there is a mystical Jezebel. So that these ancient hostile powers have their antitypes in all the modern hostile powers; and thus, after you got the historical and the literal

meaning, then it will apply in a way of accommodation to any system by which the people of God have been persecuted. But upon this I will not enlarge.

Now Daniel, as you see, was a highly favored man. And while some say we should not meddle with these prophecies and these mysterious things, let us ask the question, Was the revelation of those things of any use to Daniel? See what it did for Daniel, even temporarily, and see how it exalted Daniel's friends; and it was by means of these revelations to Daniel that the Lord fulfilled to his people that promise in the 11th of Ezekiel, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." And so, the Lord thus favoring Daniel, it made Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge that "of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret." So that this revelation made to Daniel had great practical advantages. And I am sure, for myself, I should touch very lightly indeed upon these things if they did not apply to our present experience, if they did not apply to us in our present position. If they formed no guide for us in prayer, in faith, in sentiment, or in practice, then I should think it a loss of time to dwell upon these things; but I have never yet found these things so empty as people in general say they are.

We have in our text, first, *the prince*; secondly, *his companions, the princes*, thirdly, *the adversary*; and fourthly, *the victory of the prince and those with him over this mighty adversary*.

First, then, just a word upon *the prince*. Jesus Christ, as the Prince of princes, is the representative of his people, that he has power with God and with men, and has prevailed. When the Lord said to Jacob. "As a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed," you must not understand an earthly prince. Why, an earthly prince has no power with God because he is a prince. We must remember that the word "Prince" there means Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ had power with God in his life. The Savior so prevailed in his life over everything that stood against us, and so prevailed with God, that the blessed God stepped in and said that he was well pleased for his righteousness' sake; and several times during his life did the Lord appear to him and say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And so, when the Savior came to the solemn, the most solemn part, that of atoning for sin, there again he had power with God. God accepted him as the burnt offering, God accepted him as the sin offering, God accepted him as the peace offering, God accepted him as the meat offering; God accepted him, and asks nothing more. I am sure you are never weary of hearing the blessed words, "It is finished." Here, then, he had power with God and with men. Why are these two coupled together? Why, because while the Savior prevailed with God to please him by his life and by his atoning death, he did at the same time put away the sins of men; he did at the same time swallow up in victory the death in which we were involved; he did at the same time take away the curse under which men by nature are; he did at the same time bruise the head of him by whom we have all of us when in a state of nature been led captive at his will. But the Savior, as the Prince, having thus power with God and with men, has prevailed. Bless his holy name! What a sweet thought it is that you need no righteousness of your own; you are to do only as David did; "I will make mention of your righteousness;" I am a poor condemned sinner.

"Nothing but sin I you can give;"

"I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours only." Why, some of you that are concerned, if you think anything now of your duties and doings, a little more experience will lower

all these, and you will cast them to the moles and to the bats, and you will see such a glory in the atonement of Jesus Christ that you will each say to yourself, Why, I might as well try to improve the perfections of God Almighty as to attempt to add anything of my own to the atonement of Jesus Christ. "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Here, then, is the Prince that had power with God and with men. But not only had he power with God and with men at Calvary's cross, he has power with men now. Oh, how has he won our hearts I say, what power has he exercised over us! He has our souls, he has our hearts, he has our minds, he has us altogether in the almighty grasp of his everlasting love; and we feel tied to him and bound to him in sweet captivity, the very captivity itself is our freedom. And then we read in his blessed word that those whom he has thus drawn to himself, none shall pluck them out of his hands, and that none shall pluck them out of his Father's hands. Oh, how he has prevailed! And so he has prevailed with us now wonderfully; for though our nature is full of enmity against Christ, against the order of his salvation, yet he has so won our hearts that there is a love in our hearts that wonderfully overcomes the enmity; so that instead of our living a life of enmity to him, we live a life of love to him; instead of living a life of antiprayer to him, we are brought to where the Savior says, "He that is not with me is against me" "but then our souls, through his mercy and through his power, for "he shall make his people willing in the day of his power," our souls are with him. "He that is not with me", he that is not decided for me, "is against me." There must be no frivolous work here; we must have the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of Christ was a spirit of decision for us; and if we have that spirit, it will be a spirit of decision for him. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me", does not fall in with me as the way, the truth, and the life, "scatters abroad." Here, then, is one representation of this Prince of princes.

Another representation of this Prince is that in the 9th of Isaiah, where he is called "the Prince of Peace;" and then his ruling power is beautifully described. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Now that peace that we have in him is the constant remedy for our troubles. Our sins will trouble us as long as we live; for our knowledge of the Savior's atonement is so comparatively contracted that we sometimes get into such a state as almost to give more honor to Satan than we do to the Savior; as though sin was more able to destroy than Jesus Christ is to save. And because we feel from time to time troubled, of the hardness of our hearts, the darkness of our minds, the contractedness of our souls, and our apparently utter destitution of any spiritual feeling, when this comes on, I say, we are such poor creatures that we are apt to think that things are with him as they are with us, that is to say, that we judge of what we are in him by what we are in ourselves. "This," said one of old, "is my infirmity." But when the Lord reappeared to him, Ah, he says, I have been judging after the flesh; I have been judging of my state not by what I am in Christ, not by my standing there, but by what I am in myself, "This is my infirmity;" but "you shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Sin ended and destroyed the peace of angels; sin ended and destroyed the peace of the first Adam; and sin will end and destroy the peace, such a peace as it is, of this world; but who shall destroy the peace that is in Christ? My sins? No. My sins are by that peace destroyed; the enemy by that peace is destroyed. Jesus Christ is our peace, and you must destroy him before you destroy that peace we have in Christ. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer;" ah, what will the next words be? "Be of good cheer;" if you overcome the world, and are always heavenly, and aim always spiritual, and the world never in any sense overcomes you, but that you are always the conqueror, and always above the world; then be of good cheer?

Had he said this to such poor creatures as he makes his people feel themselves to be, there had been no good cheer in that. But he says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So, if your conscience and Satan tell you that the world is sometimes against your will too much for you, then plead the truth that it was never too much for the Savior, that he always overcame it; and in receiving him, he is your victory over the world. Thus, then, "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it;" that is, the king and the people themselves shall be in peace. That shows what a good king he is, satisfies all his subjects. I suppose there never was yet an earthly king that could reign with such wisdom and goodness as perfectly to satisfy all his subjects. But Jesus Christ does, he reigns in that perfection and in that way that breaks in pieces the oppressor, and indeed that satisfies all his subjects; so that while there is no breaking in nor any going out, there is not any complaining in all the streets of the vast empire of the Son of man, the Prince of Peace. "To order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice;" his righteousness makes the reign of his grace just; his righteousness makes God just, and also the justifier; his righteousness makes our eternal welfare a matter of righteousness as well as of mercy: "to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." What a sweet thing zeal is! Oh, it is a terrible thing when you lose your zeal for fellowship with God, when you seem to lose your zeal for the cause of God, for the furtherance of the gospel, when you lose your zeal to glorify God. Ah, what a wretched state the Christian is in then! Can a minister live too zealously, reach too zealously, pray too zealously? Can the hearer come to the house of God with too much fire, with too much desire with too much ardor, with too much fervency? The dear Redeemer says, "The zeal of your house has eaten me up" He never knew a cool moment towards us; he never had a cold thought or a cold feeling towards us. When he ministered a little of his own feeling, for it was nothing else, to the spirits and hearts of the two disciples, they said "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way?" They tasted for a few moments that in which he in perfection always felt, and which he in perfection still feels, and which he in perfection will to eternity feel. For while we stand and admire the wonderful reciprocal feeling expressed in Solomon's Song, yet it is eternity alone that can carry out the fullness of the fervency, the ardor, the intensity, the delight, the reality, the glory there expressed. Here, then, is the Prince. Ungodly world, blind world, cruel enemy, to set the souls of men in hostility against this Prince of Peace, that has by his life and death prevailed with God to our eternal salvation; that has made peace, and established a rule that never can be shaken; his peace remains forever. There is no end to the peace that he has established. We may be full of trouble as to this world and the things thereof, both of life and of death; but our peace in him remains unshaken, always the same; peace like a river rolling forth, bringing blessing after blessing. The apostle Paul might well call it "the peace that passes all understanding."

Now, then, as he has thus prevailed, and has established an endless rule, so in the next place he is an interposing Prince on behalf of a chosen people. Look at this, friends, though we do not preach election merely in the doctrine itself, but to impress on the minds of the people the necessity of election. You could not be saved without it. Now Jesus Christ is a prince that interposes for a chosen people. Here are the words: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." That time of trouble means the destruction of the Jewish nation. And mark what I am going to say, for though I have said it before, I have not said it very often, and I should like it to be fastened upon your minds, because it stands connected with a right view of other

scriptures: there never was since there was a nation, that is, not with the Jewish nation, such a time of trouble; and the reason why that trouble which should take place under the Romans exceeded all the preceding troubles and captivities is this; they recovered from their former captivities, but from this captivity by the Romans they will never recover. Their temple is gone, and gone forever; they are scattered, and scattered forever. And I defy all the divines and learned men in the whole world to find one scripture in all the New Testament giving the least hope to the Jew, or the Gentile either, anywhere but in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Jew, if rightly taught, would see that he is utterly hopeless as to his nationality, that is gone forever; and that his temple is gone forever; the whole of it is waxed old; the Savior changed these heavens, and folded them up as a vesture, and they are passed away; but he remains; they are perished, but he is the same; his years shall have no end. Therefore, if the Jew wants to get to God, if he has a concern to get to God, we direct him not to Canaan, not to the ancient temple: God has done with it, or he would not have suffered it to have been ultimately destroyed. We say to the Jew now that there is none other name given under heaven whereby, we can get to God, whereby we can be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now at the time of this final dispersion, this final destruction, this ultimate ruin of the Jewish nation, Jesus, the great Prince, should stand up for his people. Yes; and who shall he stand for? All that shall be found written in the book of life; these are they that he shall stand up for "every one that shall be found written in the book;" and the book of the Revelation shows us that they were written there before the foundation of the world. And just about the time, or at the time, when the Savior should stand for his people, as though he himself were taking the words in the latter part the 1st verse of the 12th of Daniel as a kind of text, it is a remarkable thing that the Savior, when speaking of his standing up for his people while the destruction of Jerusalem was going on, calls them three or four times in that chapter his "elect." "He shall send his angels, that is, his ministers, "with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect;" and "if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect;" and "for the elect's sake," whom he had chosen, he shortened the days of Roman tyranny, or else no Jewish flesh could have escaped; but God had a people among them, and for their sakes he restrained the tyranny of the Roman power; and we trust he has a people among them now, and they will be by and by manifest; and for their sakes, that are not yet manifest, but that stand in God's account, he will restrain the tyranny of the power that would destroy them. So, then, Michael, this great Prince, Michael signifying "the image or likeness of God," Jesus Christ shall stand up; "and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." It is a remarkable thing, I say, that the Savior, when referring to the same circumstance, should thus nominate his people. He nominates them by a variety of characters, but there he nominates them as the objects of divine, of absolute, and of everlasting choice. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life." Now I do not think that that means the ultimate resurrection at the last day. It does not say there all of them, but some of them some of them, "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life." And so, they did, thousands of Jews. You have a definite for an indefinite number, and no doubt the indefinite number was over the definite number, a hundred and forty and four thousand, that is a nice congregation. They awoke by the grace of God. They were all by nature sleeping in the dust of sin, in the dust of death, in the dust of delusion God awakened them up to see Jesus, and to believe in him, and thus they were awakened up to everlasting life. "Some to shame and everlasting contempt." Ah, when the Jew saw that his temple, his city, his land where gone, that all was gone, what contempt and shame did the Jew come under! and he will, as to his religion, down to the end of time. "Some to shame and everlasting contempt." And then those words in relation to those that wake up to shame and

everlasting contempt will, of course, stretch on into eternity; so that living and dying in their state of ignorance of Christ, and meaning, that they will be held in shame and everlasting contempt even when time shall be no more. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Who are the wise? Why, they who are written in the book. "Your people shall be delivered", Daniel's people. The Lord said to Daniel, "Your people shall be delivered." What sort of people were Daniel's people? This book shows pretty clearly, Daniel gives us the eternity of the kingdom, the people possessing the kingdom, that the kingdom shall not be left to other people, the people shall never give up the kingdom, and the kingdom shall never give them up. And the Lord sums up what Daniel was at the last, "You shall stand in your lot at the end of the days." So much for the Prince, his ruling power, eternal peace, and his interposition on the ground of the people's eternal choice in him. Therefore, it is that "he that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Secondly, *the princes*, "the Prince of princes." I am quite aware of the way in which this text is handled, and I will just give you the general interpretation, as it is called, and will offer no objection to it, because it is very good of the kind, namely, that Jesus Christ has entire authority over the princes and kings of the earth. Very true; I would not deny that. But I want to come to closer quarters than this. He is "the Prince of princes;" he has some companions with him, and they get their royal name from him; the whole Family in heaven and earth are named after him. Now let us see how they become princes; let us just have a look at it. I find a man in the dust of sin. You a prince? No royalty about you. Another on the dunghill of his own righteousness. You a prince? Then you are on the worst dunghill you can be on. "You generation of vipers; how can you escape the damnation of hell?" But when convinced of your state, and all your doings become loathsome, and you begin to say, Lord, what a poor creature I am! What a worthless, hell-deserving worm I am! Then come the words, "He raised up the poor out of the dust." So, the gospel will come, and lift you up a little way at a time, perhaps, and perhaps set you up all at once. The Lord sets some up a little at a time, a little more and a little more, till by and by they get right on the rock, and begin to sing, even praise unto our God. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar" that may seem a very humbling term, but if you know your own heart, you will think the term none too mean, for you are a poor beggar before God, "and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them." So that these people are now called the pillars of the earth. Now to show that I am right in taking the words there, "to set them among princes," as I do, I am so glad that the Holy Spirit has given us an interpretation of that. The 113th Psalm explains that scripture in the 2nd chapter of First Samuel, "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them." The 113th Psalm says, "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy", that is another stage in poverty, "out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." That is the princely sort of dignity that I like. These are the princes; Jesus Christ is the Prince of these princes. And these his companions, they love him. They know that he has:

"Raised them up from the gates of gaping hell,
And made their standing more secure than 'twas before they fell."

Again, to give you another view of these princes. 32nd of Isaiah: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness" there is Jesus Christ, "and princes shall rule in judgment." How shall they rule in judgement? The people of God know the truth of God, and their judgment, by that truth, is such that it cannot be set aside. "This honor has all his saints," to Judge righteous judgment; and the Lord will confirm their judgment. They bear testimony of their sinner-ship, God confirms that; they bear testimony of the riches of his grace, the ability of the Savior the eternity of God's mercy, the immutability of his counsel, and their judgment cannot be set aside. "He that is spiritual judges all things but he himself is judged of no man." "Princes shall rule in judgment." You cannot overcome the testimony of the prophets or the apostles; they shall remain the same forever. "My words," says the Lord, "which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, from henceforth and forever." They shall rule, then, in judgment. What such poor creatures as these? How can they rule in judgment, and how can they become such royal personages, and rise into such high companionship and such blessedness, and possess such prospects and powers? I will tell you; here is the secret of their success: "And a man shall be as a hiding place" they have no other refuge.

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on you;"

"A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest," from the blasting wind of their sins, from the tempest of Gods wrath. They are hid in Christ. As the Israelite was sheltered in his house by the paschal lamb, so they are thus hid in Christ. And this same man shall be as rivers of water to these poor thirsty sinners, and as the shadow of a great rock to the weary. I try to please God but I cannot; I try to be good, but cannot; I try to be righteous, but cannot; I try to please God, but cannot. What am I to do? The Savior says, "Come unto me, you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You will see that all you are trying to do I have done for you. You want to be good; I have made you good by putting sin away, and constituting you good in God's sight. You want to be righteous; I have made you righteous by suffering for your unrighteousness, and constituting you righteous. You want to be heavenly; I have made you heavenly; I have taken away your earthly image, and you are to be conformed to my image; and at the last great day, as you have borne the earthly, you shall then bear the heavenly. And you want to please God; I have pleased God for you, and you can never please God so well as by receiving that with which he is so well pleased; for "it is the will of the Father that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Therefore, what Pharaoh said to the people, the Lord will in a sense say to us, "Go to Joseph" There is no one but Joseph can save your life; there is no one but Joseph can meet our necessities; there is no one but Joseph can supply your needs, go to Joseph. These, then, are the princes.

Just one word upon *the adversary*. "He shall be broken without hands." This brings before us a point upon which good people sometimes are apt to stumble. "He shall be broken without hands" means, of course, by the judgment of God independent of man. No doubt the world said: What a fool that Noah is to differ from us all! Why, that Noah thinks he can overcome the whole world. No, Noah does not think that, but he thinks that his God can. What a fool that Lot is, to go out of Sodom! he thinks he can overcome all these cities. No, Lot does not think that, but he thinks his God can. What fools those Israelites are, to rebel against me! I am Pharaoh. I know not Jehovah; I will not obey Jehovah. What fools they are, to be deluded by that Moses, to think they can get out

of Egypt into a large place! what fools they are to think anything of the sort! Why, they think they can overcome me? No, they do not happen to think that, but they think their God can. What fools these Israelites are, to attempt to come into Canaan! Why, here are thirty-one kings; we have all entered into a covenant to stop them; what fools they are, to suppose they can overcome us! Well, they do not think they can; but they think their God can. So that well may it be said to the people of God, "Commit your way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass; he shall by your faith in his dear Son bring forth judgment for you unto victory, and this decision in your favor shall be as the light of life, and your righteousness of faith as the noonday." Then let the lover of this Prince of princes be still, and know that the Lord he is God; that there can be no separation from the love of God, that the bulwarks of Zion remain, and that Jesus and them that are with him must conquer; for he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Let his kingdom and his righteousness stand first; other things will follow, and we shall go from strength to strength:

"And the weakest saint shall win the day,
Though earth and hell obstruct the way."

God give us grace to be truly loyal to our heavenly Prince, and all must be well.