

# FREENESS AND PLENTY

Preached on Sunday Morning June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1867

by Mister JAMES WELLS

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET

Volume 9 Number 446

“And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Zechariah 14:16

THE first part of this verse occupied all our time last Lord’s Day morning. We then tried to describe what it was to be left by the enemy; second, what it was to be left by the sword of justice; and third, what it was to be so left in Zion as to have evidence that we never shall be cast out or driven out of Zion but shall dwell there forever. There are two more parts we have this morning to notice. First, *the order of worship*, “They shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts.” Second, *the dispensation under which they shall do so*, “And to keep the feast of tabernacles.” For our text is Jewish language with a Christian meaning; an old covenant scripture with a new covenant meaning, vitality, and reality; the one intended to represent the other.

First, then, *the order of worship*. Now in connection with our text it is said, “Whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain;” that is to say, that they shall come to entire privation; because, if you take rain away, it then, as a general rule, with some exceptions, indicates entire desolation; that is that to which everyone shall come that does not do as our text describes. Now in Egypt they have no rain, or at least hardly any, and are dependent, not upon the rain, but upon the annual overflow of the Nile for the supply of their needs. Therefore, the Lord said, “If the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Let us see if we can understand this. Are we to understand that those who do not thus come to the Lord are condemned, that they must come to privation, and that eternal judgments must be inflicted upon them, simply because they would not come to this feast of tabernacles? If we hold this, then we make Jesus Christ the procurer of their condemnation, we make the gospel the cause of the judgments inflicted upon them. We must therefore be careful not to turn the evidences of condemnation into conditions of condemnation; and we must be careful not to turn the evidences of salvation into conditions of salvation. For the man who knows what he is in his heart feels that if salvation be not absolute and eternally certain thing there is no hope for him. Such a one, therefore will be taught to read the Scriptures without turning evidences into conditions. Now the

not going up to Jerusalem, and the judgments that must ultimately rest upon them that do not do so, this is explained in the last verse of the third chapter of John. There it says, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Now he has not this everlasting life for believing: his faith is not the condition, but only the evidence of his salvation; "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It is the Lord himself that has given the man this faith; so that his faith is not the condition, but only the evidence. Hence a little faith is a little evidence, great faith is a greater evidence, and full assurance of faith is a satisfactory evidence. But if faith were a condition, you would bring things into sad confusion then, because condition would regulate the reward, and then little faith would have but a poor reward and great faith would have a little better reward; so, you would destroy what the apostle said, that "the reward is not of debt, but of grace." Now "he that believes not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God", shall come upon him? No, it does not say that it says something more instructive than that; it says "the wrath of God abides on him," The chief reason that men turn evidences of condemnation into conditions of condemnation, and evidences of salvation into conditions of salvation, the chief reason is their not going back far enough to the truths of the Bible. If I go back no farther than the personal and practical sins of the sinner, I do not get at that man's real sinner-ship. And, on the other hand, if I go back no farther with the Christian than his actual believing and practical works, then I do not get at his real saint-ship; I then leave out two opposite and essential truths, that throw a light upon everything. To get at the man's real sinner-ship, I must go back to the fall of man, and there I shall be instructed, and shall be taught that all became sinners by the fall of Adam; that all died in Adam; for in the day that Adam did eat the fruit, that very day he died, not physically, but he died spiritually; he became dead in trespasses and in sins. It was not by his natural death as a man that we die in him; it was by his spiritual death, his apostasy from God, his sin. There is the origin of our death. It was not because Adam died in the body that we shall die; no, our death of soul and death of body are both founded in that spiritual death that took place on the day that Adam ate the forbidden fruit. Here is the origin, then, of our sinner-ship; so that in Adam we are nothing else but sinners; "by the disobedience of one all became sinners;" "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Here, then, by this sin of Adam death reigned over all, has done, and will do so. Here I get at the man's real sinner-ship. Then if I would get at his real saintship, I must take the other side of the question, namely, that "by one man's obedience many are made righteous;" "for if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Therefore to get at the real saint-ship of the man, I must go back to what the people are constituted in Christ Jesus, and if I go back to what the people are constituted in Christ Jesus, I shall see that the people were constituted in Christ Jesus complete before the world was; I must go to what Jude speaks of when he said, "Sanctified by God the Father." And what does that sanctification mean but their being set apart in the counsels of eternity and constituted in their eternal election in Christ; they were then and there constituted complete in Him. Now in the progress of time those who were righteous before the world was, constituted complete in Christ, they are called by grace, they become believers; and their faith, together with other graces of the Spirit connected therewith, is the evidence of interest in this eternally constituted completeness that is in Christ Jesus; and this eternally constituted completeness that is in Christ Jesus is revealed to them, and banishes all idea of condition. On the other hand, the man that continues unacquainted with the gospel, the man that continues to disbelieve the truth, the man that continues in enmity against the truth, the man that continues without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world, that man thereby proves that he continues to be where the fall of man put him, under sin. The man did not bring himself

there by his own works; his own works and his own unbelief and ignorance are evidences of his being still under the wrath of God. All men therefore came under the wrath of God by the fall of man. So, then, we may discern between the wicked and the righteous, between him that serves God and him that serves him not. The Lord reveals to His own people this eternally constituted completeness that is in Christ Jesus, and that becomes the great center of attraction, and our text becomes fulfilled in their happy experience from this particular revelation complete in Christ. We have not to worship God to make us complete, we have not to go up from year to year to Jerusalem spiritually, as of course the meaning of our text is, to make us complete, or to make us safe, or to make us approved of God; no, we go up from year to year, from time to time, as an evidence of belonging to the Lord; for He has said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore in loving-kindness have I drawn you." That loving-kindness is in Christ, and Christ is in that perfection in which he appears as the expression of that loving-kindness; and our being drawn by him is the evidence of being loved, chosen, and saved; the evidence of being heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: but not conditions of it, we are not therefore saved because we do these things, but we do these things because we are saved. They that are saved shall walk in the light of this New Jerusalem. Salvation first, they are saved first. Hence said the apostle, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Now I wish to be clear here upon this part. This is not opening up precisely, perhaps, the practical part of our text, but I felt you might possibly be reading this chapter and saying, what is the meaning of that, that those that will not come up to Jerusalem are thus to be deprived, and that judgments are to be inflicted upon them? It looks as though it was because they would not come, whereas they're not coming is only the evidence that they are still in their Adam fallen state. Just the same as when Moses said, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people;" because their unwillingness to receive his truth is the evidence that they are still in their fallen state. Thus, then, in order to understand our condition as sinners, we must bring in the fall of man, and what we are by that fall; and in order to understand our standing as believers in Christ, as lovers of God, we must bring in eternal election. I am aware we live in a day when these two opposite and essential truths, namely, what we are by the fall on the one hand and, what we are by the counsels of the blessed God on the other hand, these two truths in our day are very much ignored, but not by those who feel their need of a salvation full and free. Thus, then, where the Savior says, "I was a hungered, and you gave me meat," he does not mean that they entered into the kingdom of heaven upon these terms as the conditions of their salvation, but only as the evidence that they were his friends. And the others are not shut out of heaven because they did not minister to the poor brethren; but they're not doing so is evidence that they were not Christ's friends, that they had no practical sympathy with him; and if they lived and died without practical sympathy with his members, then they had no practical sympathy with him. They might profess a great deal, but he will take no notice of their profession, he will look at their practice, and if there has been no practical sympathy towards his brethren, he will take that as an evidence that while they professed to be his friends, they were not his friends in reality; therefore, he will say, "Depart, you cursed." They are not condemned because they did not do so; no, they are condemned before that, they are condemned in their fall in Adam, and condemned as common sinners. It is true their hypocritical profession adds to their condemnation, because there is a threefold condemnation for such, they are condemned as sinners in Adam; they are condemned as common sinners, and they are

condemned as hypocrites in Zion. Therefore, it is that those who are taught of God do desire that the Lord would search them from time to time, and make them feel satisfied as to which side they are on. In order, then, to understand the order of salvation we must not lose sight of what we are by the fall of man on the one hand, and we must not lose sight of the great, the essential truth of God having chosen us and constituted us relatively all that we shall be actually when time shall be no more; all that he relatively constituted us before time commenced its course. The progress of time does not alter any of his settlements, but only develops them; the progress of time cannot disturb any of his counsels, but only makes them manifest; and everything that ever has taken, everything that does, and everything that ever can take place must be subservient to these primary, these preeminent counsels, in which the great God above all others delights. Therefore, it is that the very crucifixion of Christ carried out subserviently the determinate counsel of the great and the blessed God.

Now what does my text say? It says they *shall* go up; they *shall* do so; there is no uncertainty about it. Let us now in few words describe what this is; indeed, I have done so partly already. Let us ask ourselves the question, Are we, on the one hand, brought to feel that we are ruined throughout; that we are, in the spiritual sense of the word, when tested by the holy, the just, the infallible law of God, have we found out, leaving out all outward circumstances, that we are, when thus tested by the law of God in its spiritual meaning, things of naught, that we are altogether as an unclean thing, that all our righteousness's when thus tested are as filthy rags, and that we do all, as to any goodness, wisdom, or strength of ours, fade as a leaf, and that our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away? If we studied for a thousand years, we should never be able to find a term that better describes our character by nature than that used by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." If, then, we have found this out, what can be our attraction? Why, what was the attraction to the Jews to go to Jerusalem? Let us look at that. First, the Passover that was an attraction. Here is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an Adam sinner-ship, and there is an Adam saint-ship; and if we leave out Adam's headship, wherein we are sinners, and leave out Christ's Adam-saving headship, where in we are saints irrespective of ourselves, leave this out, and there is no attraction, not for the man that knows his real condition as a sinner. But the man that does know his real condition as a sinner, when he is tempted not to go to the house of God, his answer is, Not go to the house of God! When there is completeness in Christ, when there is perfection in Christ, when there is immutable counsel in Christ, when there are yea and amen promises in Christ. What! am I grown so infinitely proud as to suppose that my rebellions, and my staggering and stumbling have upset the counsels of God, tarnished the perfection that is in Christ; that I have ruined God himself at last, and therefore it is no use for me? Why, your answer still will be, there is completeness in Christ; there is infinite efficacy in the blood of Christ, there is an all-sufficiency in the righteousness of Christ, there is a certainty in the promises of Christ. So, it is you are led to that great declaration, "My grace is sufficient for you." Now this is the attraction. And if I know you, which I hope I do in some measure, I think if I were to die today, and could look down from heaven, I should see very few of you, there might be a few, but hope and trust very few, going to those places where this great subject of eternal completeness in the dear Savior is not the prominent theme. For, after all, it is everything; he is a substitute for everything; his is the only name that will bear eternal repetition, without any unpleasant sameness, without growing common, without cloying or wearying. The

name of Jesus will be supremely sweet to the saints of God, and that to endless ages. Here is the attraction, then. It is no use to set forth something that may please the legal bias of the mind, but at the same time cannot save the sinner.

Now this Jerusalem of course must be understood spiritually, and it means precisely the same as Mount Zion; it means that order of things by Christ Jesus in which we have eternal life; it means that order of things by Christ Jesus where every evil is banished. You read in 87th Psalm, "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God." If you run through that part of the book of Revelation that describes the city of God, can you find one evil there? I will not say, Can you find a sin there, can you find a trouble there? There is not a trouble there; there is no sighing, there is no crying, there is no sorrow, there is no pain; there is no more curse; and God wipes away all tears from off all faces. This, then, makes this New Jerusalem the attraction. That is the only city where there is no evil nor adversary concurrent; it is the only city whose walls are built to stand for ever; it is the only city whose foundations are everlasting; it is the only city whose river will never run dry; it is the only city whose paradisiacal tree will never wither; it is the only city where the citizens will to eternity sing the glorious song, sounding out aloud salvation to God and the Lamb. Thus, then, here is the attraction; but it is attractive only to those that know their state as sinners. Ah, when I look back, I can see how many religious things invented by men were my attraction; in a word, anything was religion, an old Prayer-book, the leaf of a Prayer-book, a little bit of a prayer mechanically said, anything that was religious, when I was first concerned about eternal things, was attractive to me. But I soon found out there was not anything could be a remedy but that completeness that is in Christ. It must be the blood of the paschal Lamb; it must be that which God himself has ordained. And this state of things in which we are attracted is in the last chapter of Isaiah spoken of as the new heavens and the new earth. Why, in the name of common sense as well as in the name of the Lord, should the doctrine of the new heavens and the new earth be at all ambiguous? It means nothing more and nothing less than the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The new earth does not mean an earth literally, but it means the Promised Land, the rest into which the people of God shall enter. And we are now spiritually living in the light of these new heavens. Christ is the sun, the gospel is the moon, the prophets and apostles are the stars thereof. We are living now spiritually in this Promised Land. The Promised Land is where the promises are, and the promises are in Christ Jesus; and there, when we live aright, we are living. The apostle says, "The life that I now live is by the faith of the Son of God;" and again, "for me to live is Christ, and" consequently, "to die is gain." Of this new state of things the Lord says, "As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make," which he did make, which Christ did make, for he passed away the Jewish heavens, and established the Christian heavens; he passed away the Jewish land, and established the Christian rest, the rest that remains for the people of God; he passed away the sea of wrath, and there is no more sea; so that Christ did, when he came, make the new heavens and the new earth, and that includes the dispensation of the gospel on earth, and the eternity of the glory hereafter. Now notice the contrast; "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain;" the seed there referring to those that should be called by grace during the gospel dispensation, that is, the new heavens. Just as this new state of things continues, so shall your name *continue*. You are called by Christ's name, and as that name is un-tarnishable, so is yours; as that name endures forever, so shall yours, because you are named after him. And so, shall the people remain. So that whatever we have to undergo a separation from, and we all know one thing, that we shall certainly have to undergo a separation from this life; that we all know, and we know not when, nor where, nor how; nor how soon; yet we do know there is no separation from this new Jerusalem, from this new

heaven and new earth; there is no separation from the excellency of the name we have there. Now you perceive in the first, the Jewish heavens and the Jewish earth, their name did not remain; they lost their good name, and the seed of Abraham did not remain; they are scattered as bones at the grave's mouth to this day. But here, in this New Jerusalem, where the eternal attraction is, your name and your seed shall remain. Hence it goes on, "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, from one shining of the gospel to another (for I understand the moon there to mean the gospel), "and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, said the Lord." "From one new moon to another," from one fresh shining to another, we have been together, some of us, many years, and have we not had sometimes a little fresh shining? Have you not sometimes said, "Well, I have had a little light this morning, a little light this evening, a little help?" So, then, from one fresh shining of the gospel to another, that shall throw a little more, a little more, and a little light upon things unto the perfect day. "And from one Sabbath to another." Do we not get a little rest sometimes? Are there not seasons when you can throw of your cares, your rebellions, your discontent, and say, What a silly thing I am to take so much to heart this trouble, that crook, that trial, when after all, in my right mind I believe my heavenly Father has appointed the whole? he governs the whole, he has arranged the whole. And though many of my brethren and sisters, that are not so tried, cannot enter into these departments, yet it is for the tried Christian to know that his heavenly Father has appointed and arranged the whole, and that you have nothing whatever but what the Lord intended should be laid upon you, and that he is leading you forth, and performing for you just the things that he has appointed; and that what appears to you to be the worst thing in the world that could be connected with you, in his estimation is for your welfare; at least, he has so ordered it that it shall work your highest, your greatest, and your everlasting good. When you can do so, you can rest. How many a Christian I have heard say, Well, I would not have it altered after all. This has grieved me, and that, and the other; have been mortified here and there, one way and the other; but now I can see I needed it all; for I should never mortify myself much if the Lord did not mortify me; should not humble myself much if he did not humble me; should not drink much gall or vinegar if he did not make me; so he sometimes puts the bitter cup into my hand. Then we get a little rest; "from one Sabbath to another." And then the Lord adds, "shall all flesh come to worship before me." Here, then is the purport of this part of our subject, which I must now leave; that the people of God are taught their need of an unconditional order of worship, of an unconditional salvation; and when they find that there is in the Holy Scriptures just that which they feel their need of, then they leave off turning evidences into conditions, and look at evidences as evidences while they see professors at large are everlastingly turning evidences of condemnation into conditions of condemnation, and turning evidences of salvation into conditions of salvation; whereas the Christian thus taught knows better, and therefore he reads the Scriptures without perverting them. And you may depend upon it that that reading of the Scriptures that hides and takes away the importance of the doctrine of the fall of man; that reading of the Scriptures that hides, lessens, or puts at all in the background the eternal election of the people, blessed with all spiritual blessings according as they were chosen in him, that reading of the Scriptures will lead a man to pervert the Scriptures and dying in that state, to his everlasting confusion. The apostle Paul in the 5th of the Romans, and in the 15th of 1st Corinthians, where he is summing up the final issue of all things, sums them up on those two opposite characters "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Therefore, it is they are raised from the dead and have eternal glory according to what they are constituted in the last Adam, Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus, then, from the encouragements they have they go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts. Jesus Christ is their King; he reigns over

everything. He reigns by pardon, and that largely too: he reigns by compassion, he reigns by loving kindness, he reigns by mercy, and he reigns by demonstrating the efficacy of his blood and the liberality of his heart. Hence when he was on earth, he reigned over anything and everything that came in his way. It mattered not what the disease, or what the legions of devils, or what the sins; wherever there was faith in him, his love, and compassion, and mercy burst forth His heart never was and never will be lifted up above his brethren. I am sure it is only necessary to know the Lord to make us love his blessed name above all beside, to make our feet like hinds feet and bound along in his holy ways, with the sweet assurance that he delights in mercy, that he delights in salvation, that he delights in the new heavens and the new earth; that he delights in these manifestations of his mercy, and in that eternal rest that he has prepared for his people.

But I must come to the last part, *the dispensation under which they shall worship the Lord*, “And to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Now the feast of tabernacles, as you learn from the 23rd of Leviticus, was the last of the three great annual feasts, and therefore, is intended to represent the gospel dispensation; intended to represent, as well, eternal glory, and these are the two things intended by the feast of tabernacles in its typical character. Now instead of branching out into all the parts thereof, I had better perhaps take the reigning idea of that feast, and then, the correlative matters will come in as we go along. What was the reigning idea, what was the kingly idea, as it were, of that feast? I may express it in one word, that of plenty. The harvest and the vintage were gathered in, and that feast was expressive of plenty. And it is a very beautiful thought that there is no scarcity in the gospel. Suppose we can find a scripture that seems at least to describe the antitypical feast of tabernacles, to describe it in its gospel sense, and then I am sure those of you that are brought to this feast will hold it fast that is to say, you will hold fast the testimony concerning it. I myself think that the latter part of 144th Psalm is intended to set forth the spiritual meaning of the feast of tabernacles, pointing to the gospel dispensation and to eternal glory. And, as you are aware, it runs thus, and if we test it by the apostolic age, to begin with, we shall see how everything was then fulfilled, has been fulfilling ever since, is fulfilling now, and will be consummated, established, carried out to perfection, when time shall be no more, “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.” And so, in the apostolic age, when men were called by grace, they grew very rapidly; they were not so slow of growth as I am, and perhaps some of you, but I can only speak for myself. I know if there is one in all the school of Christ slow to learn, I am that one; if there, is one dull of hearing, I am that one; and yet, dull as I am, the Lord does not turn me out. “That our sons may be a plants grown up in their youth.” So those called in the apostolic age who were convinced of their state, and enjoyed the manifestation of pardoning mercy, they went down into the baptistery, or into the river rather; and perhaps while they were being baptized, there were their enemies standing ready to take them to the prison, the torture, or the rack, almost before they had time to change their things or to get dry. They had to suffer directly, had to be put to the test directly. Why, they would put some of you to shame; you think it is not polite to be baptized, not genteel you should not like it, and I do not know what all. You would not have done for that age at all. If we were to come into such a state of things now, some of you chimney-corner sailors and fireside soldiers, some of you hothouse plants, unless you were put upon some high mountains and become a little hardier, you would flinch most dreadfully. In that age, then, they were often called upon to suffer directly. But what cared they? The Lord was with them, and gave them strength according to their day. “That our daughters may be as corner-

stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” The palace there literally means the temple of the Lord; and the daughters being as corner-stones, to denote that they should lie at right angles with the temple; and their being polished, to denote the excellency of their character. And so, it was. Oh! how many Christian women were so perfected in grace as to defy the flames of martyrdom, the rack, and all the tortures that men could inflict upon them; sometimes numbers of women tied in one bundle, and cast into the flames, or to the wild beasts! and yet they bore it all. It was needful, therefore, that they should be Christians indeed in such a day as that. Now the palace spiritually is Christ, and their being as corner-stones to denote they should be at right angles with Christ; and as he is called a palace, it is to denote these honorable women are of the royal order, belonging to the royal household, Rahab among them, not as Rahab, but as a believer in Jesus Christ, polished, finished, complete, standing in all the completeness that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. There is the beginning of the gospel dispensation; David saw it, predicted it. Then comes the numerous conversions, “That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousand in our streets.” What a scene was that when the apostle Peter spoke a few words on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand souls were brought in! just a few more words in the afternoon of the next day, and five thousand more brought in; and so on in succession, thousands here and thousands there. Ah, before the devil had time, as it were, to contrive what to do, thousands were brought from their state by nature, and became the sheep of Christ, heard his voice, followed the exalted Lamb where so ever they saw him go. “That our garners may be fully affording all manner of store.” The garners I take, to be the truths of the gospel. “That our oxen may be strong to labor,” to plough and tread out corn for the people; “that there be no breaking in nor going out.” No, the man that is once brought into this eternal city will never want to leave it; he will stay there forever. “That there be no complaining in our streets.” It is a feast, you see, not a fast, the feast of tabernacles. “Happy is that people” how emphatically that verse reads! “happy is *that* people that is in such a case.” It does not say, “Happy is *the* people,” but “*that* people,” giving emphasis to the word; “yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” Here, then, is the feast of tabernacles, meaning eternal plenty. Joel means the same thing when he says, “The floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall over flow with wine and oil.”