

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A NEW WORLD.

## A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 6TH, 1860, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter iii. 13.

WHO shall undertake to describe the greatness of the difference between the destiny of the ungodly and of the godly? The ungodly man, or the man not born of God, presently death overtakes him, and he has lost his all; and at the resurrection day, when his body shall be raised up—for there shall be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just,—when the body of the unsaved man shall be raised up, it will be only to witness the entire destruction of his only habitation; the earth and the works therein shall be burned up; and then to look forward, to that fiery indignation and eternal wrath into which he must be thrown. Truly it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Whereas, on the other hand, the man that is born of God,

"When mortal life with him shall cease,  
He will possess within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace."

And when he shall rise from the dead, and shall see this earth, and the works therein, and the elementary heavens around all burned up, and pass away with a great noise, he shall see it with exultation, because he shall have a new earth into which to enter, he shall have a new heaven which he shall possess, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and wherein he shall dwell for ever. Truly then great is the difference between the ungodly and the godly. The man who is not born of God, he remains unconscious, unconcerned, daring and presumptuous; cares not, not really so, for his precious soul, or what may become thereof; whereas on the other hand, the man that is born of God, he does care for his soul, he does mind spiritual things, he does seek the God of that mercy which he feels his need of; he does seek Jesus Christ; he does become loosened as it were, from this earth, he does become severed from his state by nature, and takes a firmer hold of firmer things; and these firmer things are the truths of the everlasting gospel; he is loosened from a kingdom that is moved, and takes hold of a kingdom which cannot be moved; even the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I shall this morning notice our text in the four-fold form in which it presents itself. First, *the needed explanation*, for I think it does need a little explanation; secondly, *the description*; "wherein dwelleth righteousness;" third, *the expectation*; "we look for new heavens and a new earth;" and then fourth and lastly, *the rule*; "according to his promise."

I. First then, THE NEEDED EXPLANATION. "A new heaven and a new earth." I will take the 16th verse of the 51st of Isaiah as a kind of key to the subject that is before us; and although in the explanation I shall give I differ from many who have gone before me, as well as from many who are now living, yet I cannot help that; if I preach at all, I must preach what

I believe to be the word of God, and the meaning or mind of the Lord in that word. Now that 16th verse of the 51st of Isaiah I think would give us to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, I should not err if I were to say, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself is the new heavens and the new earth, in his person and in that order of things which is brought about by his mediation. I think that is the conclusion at which we shall arrive before we get, or when we get, to the end of the explanation. Now in that 16th verse, the Lord, there speaking to the church and in the preceding parts of the chapter of what he had done for that church says, "I have put my words," meaning the words declarative of what he had done, "in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, thou art my people." "That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth;" the heavens there cannot mean the literal heaven, because they were already planted; cannot mean this earth, because its foundations were already laid; it must therefore mean the heavens and the earth spoken of in our text. "That I may plant the heavens." And when were the heavens planted? We go to Bethlehem, and there we meet with the plant; there we meet with the plant of great renown; there we meet with the tender plant; there we meet with the holy child Jesus. He was planted in infancy; and when he was planted the heavens were planted; shall I say that in this plant were contained all the fruits? all the promises were contained in that one plant; all the counsels of mercy were contained in that plant; and all the glory that the saints will ever possess was embodied in that plant; so that if that plant of great renown, or that was to become a plant of great renown, should fail, then the whole of it must fail. But bless the Lord, there was no danger of failing there; he planted the heavens; the heavenly promises, and the heavenly declarations, and the heavenly doctrines; they were all planted there; and by his growing up to perfection the promises grow up into perfection, the promises of mercy grow up to perfection; and the saints relatively, and shall actually by and bye, grow up to perfection. Truly then, while he was perfect in himself he also grew up to a mediatorial perfection on our behalf; looking at this it may well be said of the saints that they are perfect in Christ, and this may well be called the planting of the heavens, the new heavens, into which the saints are for ever to be brought. Then if you come to the last chapter of Revelation, there you find this plant, the tree in the midst of the city, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month; there you read the same tree, such was the perfection at which it had arrived, that its very leaves were for the healing of the nations. And in sweet association with this plant of great renown, there is a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. And in sweet association with the plant, and the perfection of this plant of great renown, it is written, "There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and they shall reign for ever and ever." Again the same scripture says, "and lay the foundations of the earth." I understand that to be the new earth; that is, that new state of things, that ultimate rest, that ultimate land of promise into which the people are to come; and therefore it follows that the foundations must accord with the land; for there remaineth a rest, a keeping of the Sabbath, for the people of God; so that the foundations of that state of things must accord with that state of things itself; for if the foundations be destroyed, what will become of the rest, of the land, of their possession? Now see how very beautifully the two accord. What are the foundations? I take the foundations to mean the life, and the death, and the resurrection of the

Lord Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus Christ is everlasting righteousness; he hath by his obedient life brought in everlasting righteousness; not anything can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. And this is one of the foundations of eternal prosperity. Take away the righteousness of Jesus Christ, then you take away one of the foundations. Then again I take his death to be another of the foundations, for the plural is there used. And there is also eternity in his death; he hath by his one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified. I take his resurrection to be another foundation; and his resurrection has in it, as you are aware, eternity; he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. Thus then, if we would know what is meant by the new heavens and the new earth, we must get at the meaning of it in the light of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having said so much, we may come now to more detail upon this matter. We look for new heavens and a new earth. Is it not true that this is just what the people of God are looking for; namely, the perfection of those heavens that were planted at Bethlehem? Is it not just what they are looking for; namely, that rest of which the Saviour's life, and death, and resurrection are the foundations? "That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth; and say unto Zion, thou art my people." Then the Lord after this carries out this matter further in detail. He gives us to understand that this new heavens and new earth is a state of eternal rejoicing; and a state in which the manhood, the perfect manhood, of all his people is secured; a state in which they, while here below we have to labour, shall receive a full reward for their labour; and a state in which he readily hears their prayers; yea, is beforehand with them; a state in which eternal tranquillity shall prevail. Hence in the 65th of Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens;" referring back to what I have already said, meaning the Lord Jesus Christ; "and a new earth. Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." Can we say that of anything earthly? Can it be said of anything earthly, rejoice in that for ever? "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." Now is it not as clear as A B C to those that are taught of God, that our weeping, our crying, our trouble, can be terminated only by the Lord Jesus Christ? If he be the end of sin, he is the end of sorrow; if he be the end of sin, he is the end of death; if he be the end of sin, he is the end of weeping, he is the end of all tribulation. That is the way I understand these words. Then again the entire manhood, the perfection of manhood, the coming up to the stature of a man in Christ; in this new state of things, divinely secured, "there shall be no more thence an infant of days," an infant of few days, for all are perfect in Christ Jesus; "nor an old man that hath not filled his days." You talk to the oldest man upon the surface of the globe, and say, Well how do you feel? Do you feel that you are quite satisfied, that you have lived long enough, and to purpose? Has everything that you have met with worked together to your good? I speak now of a man that knows not God. What would he say? He would not be able to bear such a testimony as that; he would like his life lengthened out, and lengthened out; and he would acknowledge that he has in ten thousand instances come short of what he thinks, if he had his life to live over again, he would come up to, acquire, and obtain. But in this new heavens and new earth the Christian may be an old man, but he hath filled his days; there is not one drawback in all his life; for all the drawbacks, or the things that were drawbacks to him at one time, the Lord has overruled them, and made them work for his good, let those circumstances or drawbacks be what they

may; so that he has filled his days, dies in the Lord, and goes home to heaven. "But the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed;" let a man live as long as he may, if he is out of Christ, he is but an accursed creature; he is still under sin, under the law, under wrath; he is but accursed still. None shall come short of what the Lord designs for them; that is the idea intended there; let them die as soon as they may. "The child shall die an hundred years old;" that is the child in grace; so I understand it. Take the thief on the cross; he was but a little child in grace, only a few minutes, or a few hours old when he died; and yet he was of of age in Christ; he was perfect in Christ. So that the moment the soul is born of God, it is prepared for eternity; having in it all the elements of that glory which it is for ever to possess. And then in this new state of things there is also a certainty of possession. "They shall build houses," not literally, but spiritually; they shall acquire dwelling places. You read of building up yourselves in the most holy faith; and built up in him; "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards," that is, acquire vineyards, gospel vineyards, spiritual vineyards, where they shall have the ripe grape, the pure blood of the grape; "they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord; and their offspring with them." You observe here that there is a mighty, and essential difference, between the two worlds. In this world we build, and inhabit as long as we can; we have built this chapel; how long we shall inhabit it I cannot say; but I can say one thing, we shall not inhabit it for ever; quite sure of that. But those dwellings we inhabit in Christ, there we are to dwell for ever, there we are to have no successors; that love which is my dwelling place to-day will be my dwelling place for ever; that Jesus Christ who is my dwelling place to-day will be my dwelling place for ever; the gospel freedom that is my dwelling place to-day will be my dwelling place for ever; only I possess it now only by faith, and know only in part; but when that which is in part is done away, and that which is perfect shall come, then will come in that which is promised, that fulness of joy and those pleasures that are for evermore. Looking at these things then, I take the new heavens and the new earth to mean the person, and work; and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have thought that the new heavens and the new earth mean an intermediate state of glory between this and ultimate glory; but then if that be the meaning of it, how is it in the scriptures say, "Be ye glad and rejoice *for ever* in that which I create." You observe there is eternity here. Then again the last chapter of Isaiah; "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." You observe that here is eternity. You observe that these new heavens and this new earth relate not merely to ultimate glory, but relate to the kingdom of grace now, as well as to the kingdom of glory hereafter; that is clearly proved by these two chapters to which I have referred, the 65th and 66th of Isaiah. In the 65th of Isaiah it says, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Now that cannot mean heaven; prayer is lost in praise there. Here you observe is a state of prayer; they are praying people; and before the call—it shews the interest, the eternal interest, which the Lord has in this state of things, and in the people chosen, for they are a chosen people to dwell in this state of things; before they call, while they are ruminating; when he knew his disciples were desirous to ask him, even before they did ask him he answered; "and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Then again in the last chapter of Isaiah it is said of these same persons, belonging to these new heavens

and new earth, that "they shall come up to worship me," the Lord says, "from one new moon to another;" that is from one renewing to another; and from one sabbath to another will mean from one rest to another, one repose to another, one refreshing to another; and shall worship the Lord in Jerusalem. And is it not so now? Is it not the renewed illuminations that help us along; it is not the new rest, the new refreshings, that help us along; when we can sometimes get a little sabbath, if it is only a little sabbath, that is, a little rest; when we can say, That that which just now swallowed me up, the Lord hath swallowed that up; that burden that just now bowed me down to the ground, the Lord hath taken from me, and I can stand upright; and that guilt and sin which made me a misery and terror to myself, the blood of Jesus Christ has taken it from me, and spoken infinitely louder for me than my sins can speak against me; what is this but the renewing of life, the renewing of rest, a kind of little sabbath? And what some of you would do I hardly know were it not that the Lord meets with you in the public means; indeed, I may say so of the great majority of the people of God. You have the world to encounter; the world is carnalising, and you have a nature in accordance therewith; and you have all the anxieties and cares of business. I am not now reproving you, these things must be attended to; I am only saying that perhaps by the end of the week you may have got careless, and cold, and carnal, and the world seems everything; and then if the Lord be with the minister, and bring home on the sabbath a word with power, how it illuminates the eyes, how it helps you on in the way of the Lord. I do not wonder at the apostle saying, "Not forsaking the assembling yourselves together." And Watts handles this subject very nicely when he says,

"The Lord loves the tents of Jacob well;  
But makes a more delightful stay  
Where churches meet to praise and pray."

I am not now, confining the Lord to means; but I do say that these refreshings are a great help by the way. I think you will see, then, that the new heavens and the new earth will mean Jesus Christ, who was planted at Bethlehem, who has grown up into perfection; and who has brought about this state of things in which the Lord appears in his love, and mercy, and salvation. "New." You are aware the character of it as new exactly accords with the Saviour; he is that new and living way, and he gives us a new heart; and it accords with the new covenant; and he himself says, "Behold, I make all things new." I therefore, when I look, at the fact that Jesus Christ is in his person and work these heavens; that he is this new earth; when I look, in the next place, at another truth, namely, that it relates to time, for the people are a praying people, a praising people, going up to worship the Lord from time to time; I then bring in some other scriptures; and they appear to me all to mean the same thing. 51st of Isaiah; "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Go to the 1st chapter of the 1st Epistle of Peter; I read there of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for you, who are kept through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time; the same thing. How can the new heavens and the new earth and Peter's eternal inheritance be two different things? "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain; my righteousness shall not be abolished; my salvation shall be for ever; "an inheritance incorruptible undefiled, and that fadeth not away." So that I take the eternal righteou-

ness, the eternal salvation, the new heavens and the new earth, Daniel's everlasting kingdom, Peter's incorruptible inheritance, and John's eternal city; I take them all as so many modes of setting forth one and the same thing; namely, the glory that should follow the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "We look for new heavens and a new earth." And if you say, Well, but why should we be said to look for them if they are come? Why, for their perfection; but that we shall come to presently. This new heaven and new earth then, I understand spiritually, and not literally. I do not myself believe in more than two personal comings of the Lord Jesus Christ; he came in his humiliation to accomplish the salvation of sinners; he will come ultimately in his glory to raise both the just and the unjust; so that there is but one literal resurrection. There are two resurrections if we take it in the spiritual sense; "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." The first resurrection is regeneration; the man that hath part in regeneration, or who is born of God, he is blessed and he is holy; he belongs to Christ; and over him the second death shall have no power. Depend upon it the closer we keep to things that are eternal and to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we are profited.

II. Secondly, THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS STATE OF THINGS. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." I notice here a three-fold contrast. First, it is a contrast to our Adam-fallen state; and in our Adam-fallen state we are free from righteousness; we are every way filthy and abominable, and infinitely repulsive to infinite holiness, integrity, and justice. Now, in contrast to this, we have in the Lord Jesus Christ righteousness and strength; his blood cleanseth from all sin, his righteousness justifies from all things. Here, then, dwelleth righteousness, in contrast to our Adam-fallen state; so that the first Adam must die, but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, never dies; he liveth for ever, and we live by him. Secondly, it is a contrast to the world generally. In this world dwelleth unrighteousness, and so it will to the end of time. It will be greatly neutralised as regards its outward development during the thousand years of Christ's spiritual reign, but still it will not be annihilated, for at the end of that period the Gog and Magog, whose number is as the sand of the sea, shall again appear, and bring into operation all the old elements of old Adam, of sin, and hell, and shall make another and a last attempt to swallow up the church; but God shall meet them in that attempt, and pour his judgments upon them. Why, in this land, where we pray, preach, and do everything we can, though there are vast numbers, and we must be thankful for it, that do attend places of worship, yet the numbers that do attend—I include now all sects and parties—are but few in comparison of the vast numbers that attend no place of worship at all; so that in this world, taking even that mere moral view of the matter, this unrighteousness everywhere dwells. And then if we estimate the numbers that hate the truth, and include them, oh, how extensively doth unrighteousness still dwell in this world! Some have thought that by certain organisations and doings they can drive it out; but alas, their first object is generally to drive God's truth out, get rid of that, and then make use of something else as a means of driving the devil out; whereas the divine course is to employ nothing but God's eternal truth; and Satan cares no more for mere human organisations and systems, and such men, than he cared for the sons of Sceva. I have often thought of Erskine's words relative to sin in this world; he well observes that

"Sin, the author of turmoil,  
The cause of death and hell,  
Of all things here below  
Doth most befriended dwell;"

and that which alone can do sinners good was of all things the most hated.

One could hardly believe that human nature was gone so far, and sunk into such frightful depths of depravity; we could not have believed, had not the fact been set before our eyes, that when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in this world, having nothing whatever about him to excite envy; if he had settled down in some great mansion, kept an equipage, and made a strange worldly to do, like Solomon, there might have been something to envy; but he came in meekness, in lowliness, in poverty, in humiliation; he returned everywhere good for evil, went about doing good, while himself had not where to lay his head; and simply because he was seeking to carry out the eternal counsels of the everlasting God for the salvation of sinners, such was the craft of the adversary, and such the depravity of human nature, that thousands of human beings, that needed the very blood that then ran in his veins, cried out with one voice, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." Truly, then, the contrast between the unrighteousness of this world and the righteousness of that world into which the Lord brings his saints, is very great. But thirdly, there is a contrast to hell. There is no righteousness in hell, except the righteousness of God's wrath; there is no righteousness in the lost; they retain their enmity; they retain all the elements of sin, all the blasphemies of sin; they retain all the wretchedness of it, and all the obstinacy of enmity against the truth. As I have lately observed, the rich man in hell would have his way of converting sinners; he would make out that if one were sent from the dead, they would repent, in direct opposition to God's truth, that Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." There is no old Adam there to cripple us; there is no ungodly world there to vex us, no blasphemy there. How complete the contrast is. Again, righteousness will also mean that the people themselves are all perfectly reconciled to God and to each other. They are all justified by faith; they all have the same peace with the same God by the same righteousness; and they all have the same access unto the same grace wherein they all stand, and rejoice in the same hope of the same glory of the blessed God. Everything is right; not a wrong thought; not a wrong word; not a wrong circumstance; everything harmonious. Here we are monsters in sin, and mere minnows in grace; what little things we are in matters spiritual in comparison of what we are in sin and in the things of the world. Oh, what a monster, what a frightful image, is our old man! what a little babe, what a poor crying little creature, is the new man; so that we may well call ourselves little children. The days of giants seem to have gone past; hardly one of us, I think, in our day, knows much of that gigantic power which the ancients had with God, in their devotion to God, their wondrous victories over the enemy, and the joy with which, from time to time, under circumstances the most adverse, they drew water from the wells of salvation; and could sing as they passed through this valley of tears,

"The righteous shall hold on his way."

This is the kind of revival I want to see; I want to see and to participate in it myself. I want to have more power with God; I want to have more of his righteousness, more of his grace, of his mercy, of his presence. We want none of earth in heaven; but we want as much of heaven on earth as we can get. I care not how low the earth be put, so that the heavens will come down and raise us up, and raise us into fellowship with that wherein dwelleth righteousness. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness," then, will mean that the people are reconciled to God, brought into sweet harmony with electing grace, with the covenant of grace, with the mediation of grace, with regenerating grace, with the counsels of God, with the state of things which the Lord himself hath established; and they are reconciled also to

each other; in contrast to what it is in hell, I had almost said in contrast to what it is on earth.

III. But thirdly, we *look* for a new heaven. I hardly know what to say on this; perhaps we live in an age when we cannot preach much upon such a subject as this. I am afraid that when we contrast the blessedness, as far as we can apprehend it, of these new heavens with our looking for them, I am afraid our looking for them does not much accord with the value of them. Naturally we look for anything earthly with all the anxiousness and eagerness imaginable, sacrifice almost anything and everything for it; that is our old nature, so averse to everything divine; and it is only now and then that we look with corresponding desire, earnestness, and zeal for eternal things. That shows how little we partake of the spirit of Christ. See the Saviour; see him, for the joy that was set before him, enduring the cross; nothing on earth could stop him. Satan offered him the kingdoms of this world; they were a toy he despised; the people sought to take him by force, and make him a king; he despised such a toy; and though they heaped all manner of reproach upon him because of the path in which he walked, and the object which he sought, he despised the shame, disdained to be moved by it; the joy that was set before him always had his burning, but majestic zeal, always had his devotion night and day, being in the mountains all night in prayer. May the Lord enable us, then, to look with more constancy, and more eagerness, and more firmness, after things that are eternal. We have not followed cunningly-devised fables; we are not aiming at that which we may possess to-day, and lose to-morrow; we are not seeking that which, when it is possessed, is like the things of this world, most of them very much better in anticipation than in actual possession; it is not so with spiritual things; they are in actual possession infinitely better than they are in anticipation.

IV. But lastly, "according to his promise." This is a part of the subject upon which a great deal might be said, because it is a very important one; but my time being gone, I must say very little. 4th of the Romans, the apostle Paul, by the Holy Ghost, is led to instruct us upon the way in which we are to look for this state of things; upon the way in which we are to look for this eternal possession of this glorious inheritance. He shows that the promise neither to Abraham nor to his seed was through the law; for if it be through the law, if it be conditional, if it be of works, then faith is made void, and the promise of none effect. And now just notice the beautifully instructive way in which he speaks. After showing that the promise is not given through the law, but through the righteousness of faith, that is, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, he then makes this declaration, "the law worketh wrath." How did he know that? He knew it from his own soul's experience. The commandment came; sin revived, and he died; that is all the law can do; it brings the wrath of God into your soul, and excites your wrath and rebellion against God. "For where no law is," that is, no law of wrath, "there is no transgression." Where is that? In Christ. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." So, then, the promise is yea and amen; and never was forfeited yet. Well, then, we are not to let our want of earnestness, our want of zeal, discourage us; no; there is the promise, and the promise is unto faith; the promise is to the poor and needy; the promise is to the man that has become dead to the law, and has no hope but in Him who is the great law fulfiller, the end of the law for righteousness.