

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE TRUE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28TH, 1864, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."—John iii. 13.

THE dispensational kingdom of heaven on earth is called heaven. And if heaven mean that which is holy, if heaven mean that which is righteous, if heaven mean that which is Godlike, if heaven stand in contrast to everything that is sinful, and to the misery of fallen man; if heaven stand in contrast to death and hell, then I am sure the dispensation of the gospel may well be called heaven. Hence the church while on earth is spoken of as being in heaven. Hence John saw a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, on her head a crown of twelve stars. There can be no question, I think, but that the heaven here spoken of means the dispensation here below; so that Jesus hath said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." I will therefore go this morning through this subject with all the trembling care of which I am capable. We notice, then, first, *the dispensational heaven in which Christ still is*. Secondly, *that which we are in this dispensational heaven to realize before we reach the heaven above*.

First, then, *the dispensational heaven in which Christ still is*. Here is a dispensational heaven. What is it? Let us try and understand it; for it has been, as is self-evident, most terribly beclouded and most dreadfully perverted. Let us, therefore, bless the Lord for the Holy Scriptures, and for the Holy Spirit, to guide us in a matter so momentous. For if we receive another spirit, which is not the spirit of the new covenant; if we receive another gospel, which is not the gospel of the grace of God; or if we receive another Jesus, who is not the Saviour that God hath sent, then the fearful consequence is that we are deceived. Hence, "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The people were sincere in that prayer, no doubt, when the Saviour spoke of the bread that came from heaven, and they said, "Evermore give us this bread." But when the Saviour pointed out to them the way in which that bread should come, and that he himself is the very substance thereof, then, while they desired the thing itself, yet the order of it and the spirit of it was that of which they were ignorant, and against which they were at enmity. And I do not know that we can find anywhere in the New Testament a more beautiful, clear representation of this heaven, this dispensational heaven, than that representation which we have in this chapter. Now it is a dispensation of life. And we have in this chapter this dispensation represented. I may say, the representation we have in this 3rd chapter of John seems to include everything of this dispensation. Now the first is that of regeneration. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Ever remember, that by the kingdom of God you are to understand, in the first place, as the first principle of that kingdom, the media-

torial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the end of sin; and having finished transgression, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, this his righteousness lays at the foundation of the kingdom, so that there can no sin enter into his kingdom. Before sin—I mean vitally—can enter into his kingdom, that same sin must counteract his atonement, that same sin must corrupt and overcome his righteousness, that same sin must undo the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. So that, by the kingdom of Jesus Christ, its first principle is that of the mediatorial work, the perfect work, of Jesus Christ. Now, except a man be born again, he cannot see this; that is, he cannot see it as adapted to his necessity. So that if you see that you are that sinner that you can plead before God for your justification only Christ's righteousness; you come before God, and Can I justify, you will say to yourself, all that I have thought? Can I justify all that I have said in my time? Can I justify all that I have done in my time? No; your mouth will be stopped. But, you will say, the righteousness of Jesus Christ can justify me from all this, and the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse me from all this. Now, if thou seest this work of Christ exactly adapted to thee, that it meets thee in thy guilt and shame, and so puts an end to the whole, and that thou canst plead this work of Christ as the way in which God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; if thou thus seest the Son in what he has done, so as to believe on him and love him, then thou hast everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. This, then, is the first principle, namely, the mediatorial work of Christ. And the next point that I touch upon is, to be made to see it in its exact adaptation to us. Except a man be born again, he cannot so see the real work of Christ as to rest upon it; he cannot so see the real work of Christ as for his affections thereby to be drawn out towards God. And if you do so see it as to rest upon it, and your affections thereby drawn out towards God, then you are born of God. And I am sure Jesus Christ is in this heaven; I am sure Jesus Christ is in the dispensational heaven. And if you thus see Jesus Christ as having by his work founded an eternal reign of grace, founded an eternal reign of promise, founded an eternal reign of mercy, founded an eternal reign of the people—for they shall reign for ever and ever,—if you see this pretty clearly, there will be times when your soul will be drawn out, I was going to say, almost out of the body. You will look at God the Father; you will say, My Father, what love is this! what provision is this! what mercy is this! Where shall I find such love as this? And you will look to Jesus, and you will say, Was ever love like this? Oh, what a Saviour! Thou hast met me as in the lowest hell, and delivered me therefrom; thou hast met me under mountains of guilt, and delivered me therefrom; thou hast found me wandering far from God, and to rescue my soul from danger thou hast interposed thy precious blood. Sweetest Jesus! let me kiss thy sacred feet, wash them with tears, as did the woman of old. And your affections will be drawn out toward the Holy Spirit of God. You will say, "Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, how am I indebted to thee! Once I was blind, now I see: once unconvinced of my state, now convinced; once I sought not the Lord, and now my soul followeth hard after him. Once I saw no form, comeliness, or beauty, in Jesus; now I see him in the form of God; I see all comeliness and beauty there; I see him now as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. How thou wilt long for more of this divine teaching, and you will say, Well, then, if this dispensation be the heaven in which Jesus is, I do see it. Except a man be born again, he cannot see this kingdom; how it is founded, what it is founded upon, nor how it is maintained. Oh, what a mercy, friends; what a mercy, that even the very best doings of the dear children of God form no part of this kingdom! for their best doings are all more or less associated with drawbacks and infirmities; one

a man of like passions with the other; all but poor creatures. This kingdom, therefore, is founded upon that which is exclusively divine, upon the mediatorial work of Christ, and the immutability of the blessed God.

Then the Saviour gives us another sweet revelation of this great change. "Except a man be born of water,"—meaning the word of God, so I take it. "That he might sanctify the church by the washing of water, by the word;" and, "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." So that it is not the water apart from the Spirit, nor is it the Spirit apart from the water—that is to say, it is not the word itself apart from the Spirit, nor the Spirit apart from the word, for though the Holy Spirit doth sometimes work without the word, he never works contrary to the word; and wherever he is the Teacher, such must be tested by the word as to whether the work be real. Now, when a man is thus born of the word and the Spirit of God, he enters into the kingdom. He not only sees it, but he enters into it, he understands it, he rests his everlasting all upon it, he rests his hope upon it, he rests his soul upon it. Ah, he says here,—

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

He enters into the kingdom. And then the Saviour gives another very encouraging view of this matter. When Nicodemus took this matter carnally instead of spiritually, the dear Saviour—and I am sure we must all bless his holy name for that beautiful distinction—the dear Saviour says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The Christian after the flesh can join with the apostle Paul, "With my flesh I serve the law of sin;" "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." There is no soundness in my flesh; loathsome disease, saith David, when describing what he is after the flesh. There is the Christian's burden, there is the Christian's trial. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So, bless the Lord! amidst much that is earthly, there is a little something that is heavenly; amidst much that is carnal, there is a little something that is spiritual; and amidst much that drags us down, there are, nevertheless, some few desires after God, compared to the smoking flax which the Saviour will not quench; amidst all our weaknesses, there is, nevertheless, a sight and sense of our need of Christ, so that we are as poor bruised reeds, which the Saviour will not break. Here, then, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is Spirit." It is not for me to inquire what the man's natural temperament may be, nor what he is after the flesh; I want to know what kind of spirit he is of; I want to know what kind of faith he is of; I want to know what kind of a gospel that is which suits him; for if nothing but God's gospel will suit him, then truly such an one is where the Son of man is—viz., in heaven—in this heavenly dispensation. And then, again—and I think we ought not to pass by it,—the Saviour says, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Let me say to one and all, we live in a day when there is a great deal said about believing, and we can say nothing in favour of disbelieving; but, my hearer, before I can conclude that I am a believer in Jesus Christ, I must ascertain how I became a believer in Jesus Christ; for, have what faith I may, if at the root of that faith regeneration be absent, if at the root of that faith the quickening power of the Holy Spirit be absent, if I am not a quickened soul, a regenerated soul, if I have not the Spirit of Christ, I may believe every iota of the gospel and be damned at last. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." There must be this change; you must see, under a sight and sense of your need, the adaptability of the Saviour's work, and there must be a seeking to enter into a realization of these things, and you will find out the difference between the flesh and the Spirit; that after the flesh you are the same as you ever were; regeneration makes no difference in the qualities of the creature, as a sinful creature considered. It is true it brings those

qualities more or less into subjection, but it does not alter them; there they exist. But it does make a difference to the man after the Spirit. He is now of a different spirit; he becomes of a gospel spirit, a lover of the truth, and of that freedom which is in Christ. So, then, let us ask what we know of this change, what we know of the vital reality of godliness. The Lord has so ordered it that we are to have all our dark seasons, and all our tremblings, and all our fearings, and all our wretchedness in this life; therefore, brethren, never mind. Do you walk in darkness? are you very wretched? are you cast down? and are you miserable? and do you look back at the time when you knew not God, and you were ten times more comfortable? Do you look round and see the world rejoice, and see them happy, and that they have no troubles in their life, and no bands in their death, and you are almost tempted to envy the ungodly? This may be your experience: never mind. All their pleasures will be turned into plagues; not that that is any pleasure to you, because you do not wish your fellow-creatures any harm,—but your sorrow will be turned into joy. Then better to receive your evil things in this life than for the things of this life to make up, in your estimation, your good things. Lazarus must receive his evil things in this life, and when he comes to the end there is an end of all that is evil; then shall be brought to pass the saying, “Thou shalt not see evil any more.” Here, then, is a dispensation. And there is a mystery in this regeneration; first, to the man, himself; second, to others. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” When a wave of wind passes you, you cannot tell where it set out, and you cannot tell where it will stop, or where it will go to; “thou hearest the sound thereof.” “So is every one that is born of the Spirit.” When you were first concerned for eternal things, you could not think where it came from. What ever makes me so miserable? Why, I am a sinner, a guilty sinner, a lost sinner; I am a helpless sinner; hell is waiting for me, the judgments of God are following me up: What ever does it mean? “Thou hearest the sound thereof;” and a howling sound it is, and an awful sound it is, at the first. “Canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” By-and-bye you find it brings you to God. Yes. “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live;” we presently see them standing upon their feet an exceeding great army. By-and-bye the Lord brings them into the liberty of the gospel. Ah, say you, I did not know where this experience came from, nor where it would go to; but now I know that the Lord hath taken me, and borne me as on eagle’s wings, and brought me to himself. And now that which has been hitherto a mystery to you will be a mystery to others. The natural man cannot enter into this department. Such, then, are two of the features of this dispensation. First, here is the mediatorial work of Christ; second, here is that work of the Holy Spirit by which we are brought to see it in its adaptation to us, and by which we enter into it, the realization of it, and by which we are to distinguish between the faith of the Christian and the creatureship—the old creatureship—of the Christian; the whole of it a mystery to us at the first; it is no longer, in one sense, a mystery to us now, because now, through grace, we understand it.

Now, as it is thus a dispensation of stability, and a dispensation of life, it is also a dispensation of health. And I am sure Jesus Christ is in mediatorial work, for he wrought it; and I am sure he is in regeneration, for he is the life of it. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” There is the health; the Israelite was healed. So we have perfect health in Christ; always well there. “Thou art the health of my countenance.” Yet how we shrink back from that world where “the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick; the people

that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." And if you are made of the same kind of materials that I am, I will tell you what I am. I unhappily sometimes treat heaven as though heaven was earth, and treat earth as though earth was heaven. We confess the many sicknesses, afflictions, troubles, perturbations, and discouragements we have here; and yet, notwithstanding all, there is a tremendous fondness for this wretched state of things; we seem to hug our misery. So it is; and when we should go home I know not, if the matter was left with us, and therefore the Lord would not leave the matter with us, but kept it in his own hands. There the inhabitants shall no more say that I am sick. Jesus is their health. He bore our sicknesses away, and there is eternal health. Always easy, always well; we are told in that beautiful scripture concerning the blessed result of this dispensation, "And there shall be no more pain." It is a dispensation, then, of stability,—Jesus Christ is that stability; a dispensation of life,—Christ is that life; a dispensation of health, and Christ is that health.

Fourth, it is a heaven of loving kindness, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Loving kindness! God the Father dwells there only in loving kindness; and that that loving kindness should not be interrupted, he has chosen a way in which all interruption shall be removed, and that way is his dear Son. He dwells there in loving kindness; he loveth the people, he loveth the gates of Zion, he loveth his dear Son. Loving kindness! And so the people dwell there in loving kindness. Oh, it would be poor work if that were not the element. The love of the truth. If you have in your soul that feeling, the love of the truth, gospel truth, new covenant truth, and you dwell in Zion with that feeling; why, that one feeling in your soul, that one experience, though your love may be at present small, and your faith small, yet it is a greater treasure than the whole material universe! Look through the Scriptures, and the promises are everywhere to them that have the love of the truth. It is a dispensation, then, of loving kindness. What the Father doth, he doth in loving kindness; though he so often behind a frowning providence hides a smiling face, we cannot always see that loving kindness. What the Saviour doth, he doth in loving kindness; and what the Holy Spirit doth, he doth in loving kindness. And what ministers do in their incessant day and night work, and I will say tremendous labours, those who are enabled to throw their whole souls into the work, they do from love, from loving kindness. Hence it was the feeling of the apostle, when looking at the various afflictions that beset his path, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Bless the Lord, then, for this loving kindness; seeking the truth in love, speaking the truth in love, walking in love, abiding by the truth in love. Why, Christians, when under this influence, are the most peaceful and forgiving people upon the face of the earth, especially when they know their election of God; for when they can trace this love up in its own order, unperverted, then it has the greatest effect upon them, which made the apostle say, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God." The elect of God are represented as an iron-hearted, unfeeling sort of people; but the apostle knew better; he knew that where the truth was rightly received, they were very different from that. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." And so it is that "love covers the multitude of sins." Again, it is a dispensation also of the closest possible relationship. And how shall I set this forth? The apostle Paul says, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." Now you in your mind very properly sympathize

with your body; very proper; it is natural; unnatural if you did not. You sympathize with it all you can; whatever there is the matter with it, you feel you must attend to it all you can. Now, friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is God as well as man. He took our nature; that human nature, soul and body, as much became an integral and essential part of his person as your body is a part of your person. And Jesus Christ sympathized with his human nature in all the intensity of his almighty divinity, in the eternity of his divine love. Oh, what must be the sympathy of Divinity with humanity! Mind, he is but one person; I will not hold that Jesus Christ is two persons. He has two personal natures, 'tis true,—personal divinity and personal manhood; but he is but one person. And his sympathy with that human nature is infinite; the intensity of his divine sympathy with his human nature is infinite. Well, say you, what are you going to say then? I am going to make this declaration, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as God Almighty, as God eternal, does not sympathize more with his own personal human nature than he does with your soul and with your body. Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. Hence John would not, in this chapter, pass over this beautiful feature of the New Testament dispensation. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." "He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Shall such a record be written in relation to creatures, and be untrue in relation to the Saviour? "This is a great mystery," the apostle says, in summing up the whole; the great end he had in view was to speak of Christ and the church. Here, then, he loved the bride as he loved himself; sympathized with her as he sympathized with himself. The closeness of the tie here is God the Father's infinite sympathy with his dear Son, and by that dear Son those sympathies reach us. Here is Jesus Christ's divine sympathy with his human nature, and by sympathizing with that human nature, he sympathizes with the whole seed of Abraham, for he took upon him the seed of Abraham. And the Eternal Spirit dwelling in the Father is one in those sympathies; the Holy Spirit dwelling in Christ is one with those sympathies. Oh, my hearer, it is a dispensation of the closest tie; he the head and we the members. Any wonder, therefore, if we look at the closeness of the tie, that the Saviour should say to the persecutor, "Why persecutest thou me?" Any wonder that the Saviour should gratulate his people at the last day, and say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me?" Yes; "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." The holy and blessed Spirit lead us deeply into this mystery; into this department of the New Testament dispensation, of the new covenant, and then I am sure it will cause our love to God to abound, and we shall leave off having those hardening views of God, as though he was unto us something tyrannical, something not endearing; whereas, view him in and by Christ Jesus, after this order of things, God's name is love, God is love. And to dwell in him scripturally is to dwell in love; if he dwell with us it is in love; he rests in his love; will never deviate from his love. Many waters cannot quench his love, nor can the floods drown his love. Here, then, "the Son of man, which is in heaven." It is a dispensation of loving kindness and of closest sympathy. Bless the Lord for the love and sympathy that exists among us now; may the Lord increase it. It is a very pleasant thing to feel that we love the Lord, to feel that we love the brethren; to fall back upon our consciences, and feel that we love him who first loved us; not that we first loved him, but that he first loved us, and so we love him because he first loved us. Such, then, is this dispensation.

And as for the Son of man being in heaven, I hardly know what to say about that; he has so many heavens. Why, say you, that is a strange sort of assertion. And yet they are all one. He had one hell; that hell was our hell; he took our hell, that hell he destroyed, swallowed up the second death as well as the first in victory. He has destroyed that hell. That

hell desired to destroy him, but he destroyed that. There is no hell for his bride, there is no hell for his brethren. There was one hell. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." How, say you, had he, or has he, five or six heavens, and yet they are all one? First, he is a heaven to himself, in himself. Yes, always felt satisfied with himself,—always. We need not attempt such a thing. We may be satisfied from ourselves, that is, from a personal experience of the Lord's goodness, but we can never be satisfied in ourselves and with ourselves. But Jesus Christ always was so. Himself, in that respect, is his own heaven. He never had an unhappy moment from anything wrong in him, for there never was any wrong in him. He never had an uneasy moment from the upbraidings of conscience; his conscience was always clear.

"His soul was white, from blemish free,
Red with the blood he shed for me."

Heaven in himself and from himself. Yes, when he was running the mighty race to gain the prize for us, it was his very meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Secondly, the new covenant is a heaven to him. Oh, he delights in the new covenant. Here now, my poor disciples, here, this is the blood of the new testament. I delight to be its Mediator, its Testator; I delight to carry out its items; I delight to establish it; I delight to reveal it unto you; I delight to bring it unto you; it is my heaven. The Son of man is in heaven in himself and in the truth. Third, I need not say that the church is also his heaven. Was there ever such a thing heard before as what the apostle saith upon this? Why, he declares in Ephesians that the church is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." She is his fulness; she is all the world to him; she is all the universe to him; he wants nothing else—quite satisfied. She fills every corner of his heart, as it were, fills all his thoughts and all his time, yea, an eternity. Fulness of heaven! It is his heaven; dwells in the church as in his paradise, in the church as in heaven. See Solomon's Song, which I must not refer to now, at least in a way of quotation, because your time is nearly gone; how beautiful Solomon's Song is upon this! yes, gratulation after gratulation, showing the church is his very heaven. "The Son of man, which is in heaven." Fourth, God the Father is his heaven. He dwells in God. I have watched that very narrowly—the oneness of the Saviour with God,—for it is a delightful thing. Not the most distant symptom of the shadow of a shade of difference between the Saviour and the Father. "My Father and I are one." Blessed Jesus! We see it, we rejoice in it, we delight in it, we glory in it, we sing of it, and shall for ever. The Holy Spirit also is his heaven. He dwells in the Spirit of God, entrusts his honours with the Spirit of God. He shall not speak of himself; the Holy Spirit shall set aside, in a sense, his own personal honours, and shall glorify me, take of mine, and show it unto you. His mediatorial work also is his heaven; he dwells in that, and will to eternity. The presence of God in heaven, or in eternity, is his heaven. So many senses, then, in which Jesus Christ is in heaven. Well, say you, is this the Christian? Is the Christian one with him in all this? Decidedly so. If he from himself is heaven to himself, he by himself will be heaven to you. The truth will be heaven to you, and the church will be heaven to you. You love to dwell in the church now, do you not? If you are a Christian you do, I am sure. God the Father will be heaven to you; the Holy Spirit a heaven to you; the work of Christ a heaven to you; the presence of God a heaven to you. All these meet in heaven. "The Son of man, which is in heaven." Thus, then, the dispensation, and Christ in that dispensation. And I am sure where he is not in the ministry, not in the heart, not in the pew, there can be no good and no life without him. Now your time is just gone, and I intended to have pointed out to you this morning what

the Old Testament says upon this very matter of Christ's standing between us and God—upon this very matter of Christ reaching, as we observed last Lord's day morning, up to the claims of law and justice.

What are we to realize in this world by Jesus Christ being thus with us on earth? Well, we are to realize, first, such a knowledge of the goodness of God that will make us satisfied therewith. "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth,"—always something good to be had in him, you see, friends—"that he may dwell in thy courts." "We shall be satisfied," there it is. Are you not satisfied with him? Yes, and with the goodness of God that is by him. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Another scripture readeth thus upon the same point, "How excellent"—here, in Christ Jesus—"is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore"—by this loving-kindness—"the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." And what river is that but the gospel? for there the many pleasures of everlasting love are revealed, and there they dwell. Just as we are favoured to drink of that river we drink into the pleasures of eternity. The second thing to be realized is establishment in the faith by what he has done. Agur, after confessing what he was, and then looking round at other people, felt that there was something that could not be done by any of the sons of men; "Who hath ascended up into heaven?" Our text tells us.—"Or descended?" Our text shows us.—"Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?" Answer, Jesus Christ hath. Our iniquities, like the wind, carried us away from God in the first Adam. Jesus Christ gathered the north wind together, and stayed the rough wind at Calvary's cross, and our sins have lost their power ever to sever us from God again. "Who hath bound the waters"—of God's wrath—"in a garment"? Answer, Jesus Christ has, in the garment of his righteousness, in the garment of his mediatorial work. Those waves and billows must have driven us to eternal perdition; but the proud waves are stayed, the dry land appears. And "who hath established all the ends of the earth?" Answer, Jesus Christ has.—Am I afar off? Ah, my faith shall see him. Far off as I am, I shall see that he has made a calm, I shall see that he has stopped the proud waves of wrath that rolled against me, and that now I shall go over dry shod to the promised land, as safe as though no wrath had ever existed; all is gone. Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life! We have this goodness, this way, opened unto us by Jesus being thus with us in this dispensation. Third, it is to establish us also in new-covenant relationship. "Their nobles shall be of themselves." That they must, that they must. If the people of God have a minister to be of any use to them, it must be one of themselves; not in any way a stranger; not a man that is a stranger to his own heart, a stranger to the wormwood and the gall, a stranger to Calvary's cross, a stranger to electing grace, a stranger to the Holy Spirit's power, a stranger to the overwhelming glories of the Mediator. "Their nobles shall be of themselves." The apostles and ministers, and noblemen they are too—the apostles and prophets, so are ministers, while the Lord makes them so. "And their governor shall proceed from the midst of them." So he did, bless his holy name! That staggered the people of old terribly, very much staggered them. Why, this Jesus, he belongs to the common people. Why, who should he belong to? "And the common people heard him gladly." Yes. "And I will cause him," saith the Lord, "to draw near;"—there it is, you see, as in our text—"for who is this"—ah! who indeed?—"that engaged his heart to approach unto me?"—to meet the flaming sword, to drink the bitter cup, to conquer the conqueror of the world, bring life and immortality to light—"who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me?" Eternity alone can answer that great question.