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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE OUTER COURT.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 16TH FEBRUARY, 1868

By MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."—REVELATION xi. 2.

THE preceding verse was our text last Lord's day morning, and we closed with some remarks upon the measurement of the altar, observing the place of the altar—that it must be at the temple; to denote that the sacrifice was to be to God, and to God only. Also that the altar was four-square, to denote that by what the Saviour has done everything is made right between God and his people. Thirdly, that this one altar also was the centre of unity to Israel as a nation. So Jesus Christ is the centre of unity to all the people of God. And fourthly, that they obtained by this one altar all that they could need, because by this one altar the Lord himself was with them. We had no time to dwell upon the sacrifice, nor shall I turn to that subject this morning, any further than just to remark that when we come to the measurement of the sacrifice, we may say with perfect safety what is said in the 11th of Job, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do?" So the atonement of Christ, as all in heaven now can witness, is high as heaven. "What canst thou do," when there is nothing to do? "It is finished," was the sound that arose from earth to heaven; and in this Book of Revelation you have the response, "It is done";—"I heard a voice from heaven saying, It is done." So then the completeness of the work was sounded first from earth to heaven, then from heaven to earth. "It is deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" And the Christian will say, "Thou hast saved me from the lowest hell." The atonement of Christ has, as it were, under-bottomed all our sin and woe; it has gone down to the bottom of these mountains, deeper than hell, has destroyed our hell, closed the gates of death and opened the gates of heaven. And it is "broader than the sea," broader than all our sins; "it is longer than the earth"; so that when we shall have done with earth, we shall then by that atonement enter into possession of all that it can bring us to. The apostle, when viewing this measurement, which means of course

to take an account of the things referred to, might well say, "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Then we are to measure them that worship in the temple—that is to test them by the Lord's own truth. The true worshippers are they that worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, that have no confidence in the flesh. It is a poor religion that does not lead us to rejoice in Christ Jesus; there is everything there to rejoice in.

We have before us this morning one perhaps of the most solemn subjects possible; for this outward court means nothing else but the Parliament, the cabinet, the seat, the synagogue, of Satan, "the court which is without the temple leave out"; or as the margin reads it, "Cast it out." And you will at once when you read the words in the margin, think of the 4th of Galatians:—"Cast out the bondwoman and her son." There you are led at once to what is meant by this outer court. Now this outer court is nominally God's temple, but in reality Satan's temple. Is it then possible that the adversary is not content to carry on his work in his own name, and in his own gross and palpable way, but that he must become an imitator of God, an imitator of Christ, an angel of light, in order to carry on his delusions, and that he should qualify ministers to advocate the system of lies which he from time to time instils into the minds of men? Under all these circumstances we are reminded of the Saviour's words, "That if it were possible they should deceive the very elect."

I will, then, look at our text in a threefold form, I will first *contrast this outward court with the true temple of God*; in other words, the worshippers belonging to this outward court with the true worshippers of God. Secondly, *the violence that shall be done to the city of God*;—"the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." Thirdly, *the decree of limitation*—forty and two months; and there the adversary must stop.

First, *the contrast between the true temple of God and this outward court* which John was not to measure; that is, he was not to reckon it one with God's temple, but to keep up that distinction and that separation which the Lord has kept up in all ages, and which will be perfected and carried out at the last great day. I will give an account of the true worshippers first, because I think it will make what is meant by the outer court the more clear. The apostle, 2 Thess. ii., gives us a description of the true temple, or in other words the true people of God. "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." This doctrine of eternal election is not understood by the world, and it is not understood even by tens of thousands of professors. They do not understand it, and hence everywhere slight it. Some ministers that I hope well of will sometimes speak like this, and I must confess that my heart does not go with them. They say, If you believe in Jesus Christ, never mind about election; whether you believe in election or not, if you believe in Jesus Christ you are a saved man. I think this a very hazardous declaration; because if you look at it, it seems inconsistent with itself—to talk of believing in Jesus Christ, and at the same time not to believe what God says concerning him. Now we will take the disciples going to Emmaus. Suppose after the Saviour had left, one had said to the other, "Well, we have seen the Lord, and we believe he is risen from the dead, because we have seen him, and that is enough. It is true he began at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded unto us the things concerning himself; and it is true our hearts did burn within us while he thus talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures; but never mind that; it does not matter what he said, we are only to believe in him, never mind about believing what he said." Do you think those disciples would reason in that way? Do you think any man taught of

God would reason in that way? One essential in believing in Jesus Christ is not only to believe in him in the mere abstract, but also to believe in what is said concerning him. Then again, it is a very great thing to see that without eternal election you cannot be saved. If God had not chosen you, you could not be saved. If you are not chosen, then you are not blessed; if you are not blessed, then there is no salvation; and if there is no salvation, there is no sanctification; and if there is no sanctification, there is no belief in the truth; and if there is no belief in the truth, then there is no being brought into the bond of the covenant. Thus then it does appear that a knowledge of our need of eternal election, an understanding and a persuasion of it, is one of the things essential to distinguish the true worshippers from others. "He hath chosen you to salvation." You see the choice and the salvation are here put together. Now can that which is put together in God's mind be wrong to be received together in our mind? Are we to receive the salvation, and say, "Well, we will have that, but we will not have the election?" The election is as much of God as the salvation; and therefore as we cannot be saved without the one so we cannot be saved without the other. Then what follows? "Through sanctification of the Spirit." Why did the Holy Spirit quicken your soul, lighten your eyes, slay your enmity, and bring you into reconciliation to God? Why, because God had chosen you, and appointed you to salvation—"Chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Here you see election from the beginning is an essential part of the truth—"and belief of the truth." And all that know the truth know that the word "truth," when understood in the Gospel sense, means that sworn, yea and amen promise which is in Christ Jesus—yea and amen to the glory of God. "Whereunto he called you." Here is not a word about your coming, not a word about its being your duty to come, not a word about you ought to come, nor that you might have come—the whole is of God from first to last. "Whereunto"—by this same order of choice, salvation, and intended sanctification—"Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here you see vocation and eternal glory are put together. "Whom he called, them he justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions"—that is the doctrines—"which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Hold them fast, for if you give them up, then you get outside of the temple, and belong to the outer court, where the curse of heaven will at the appointed time descend. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Here is the inner, the true temple; here are the true worshippers, that are poor and needy, that are brought thus to nothing, that they might receive these eternal testimonies.

We will now come to the outer court. Of course the word "court" here is metonymical in part, meaning the system and the people contained in the system. This outer court, then, means a system of delusion, feasible before men, but at the same time delusive. The Apostle saith, "Let no man deceive you by any means." It seems that many so interpreted his words in the preceding epistle as to believe that Christ was coming to judgment almost immediately; the Apostle therefore sets this to rights. "That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." The original word here is "apostasy;" that is the meaning of the Greek word *apostasia*, here translated "falling away." "Except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Now, what do they fall away from? Why, from those very doctrines contained in the latter part of the chapter. Well but, say

you, thousands of them have never professed those things. Never mind that. If you join an apostate church, you are partaker of all the evil deeds of that church in opposing God's truth, in setting aside the sovereignty of God. If your spirit answers to what I am now about to describe, then you belong to the outer court, then you are a Gentile, a heathen, and not a Christian, and if you die in that state, you will not die in the faith, but outside the faith; you will not die in the love of God, but outside of it; you will not die in his choice, but outside of it; you will not die in Christ's mediation, but outside of it; you will not die in Ezekiel's circles of eternity, but outside of the truths of the everlasting gospel. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Now, the first item there is opposition. The word *Satan* means an adversary, who opposes himself—what against? Why, against those very testimonies which I have just now stated from the latter part of this chapter of 2 Thess. ii. This is the spirit of those in the outer court—they stand opposed to eternal election; they stand opposed to the decree of salvation; they stand opposed to Divine sanctification, and substitute human sanctification into the place thereof; they stand opposed to effectual, Divine calling, and substitute in the place thereof something of a creature kind; they stand opposed to the truth of the final triumph of the saints, and rest their final success upon something to be done by the creature. But when the Lord dethrones self, and brings the man home to himself, makes him feel what a wretched thing self is, such an one makes, as it were, in the desert of his soul a straight way for our God; and he saith, Come, Lord Jesus, into the solitary desert of my soul; come in thine accomplished warfare, come in thy pardoning mercy; come and give me grace while I am here, that with that grace I may see that I shall have glory when time shall be no more. Thus the incoming of the achievement of an incarnate God takes up that soul, turns the desert into an Eden, makes it like the garden of the Lord; and then comes thanksgiving and the voice of melody, and everything that is pleasing. Now, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." I will make as little reference as I can to the original, because I know it has a bad effect generally; but the Greek word *epi*, here translated "above," might with equal propriety be rendered "over;" "He exalteth himself over." Is not this just the character of error? What is the language of error? Why, just this. I shall not allow the Lord to choose me as he pleases; I shall not allow him to take me to heaven as he pleases; I shall not allow Jesus Christ to receive me as he pleases; but I shall choose the Lord, go to heaven, receive Jesus Christ just as I please. You will always find error will set a man over the affairs of his own salvation, of his own eternal welfare; and yet the Word of God declares that "even unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Oh, my hearer, if Moses, the man of God, was on his way conditionally to the promised land, and failed, if his heavenly inheritance had stood upon no better ground, never should we have heard of Moses appearing on the mount of Transfiguration. But he knew that his eternal inheritance stood upon better grounds; he knew that God presided over all the affairs of eternal salvation. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh;"—shall I give you a new translation of that? I will give you a modern translation of it. The modern translation would be, Thou hast given all flesh power over him, to reject or accept salvation just as the creature pleases. That would be in accordance with the outer court; that would be in accordance with the doctrines of men. But which are we to believe—the doctrine of men, or the doctrine of God? "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." But the outer court system opposes that, and sets the crea-

ture over his own salvation. And some will even go so far as to tell us that it is at our peril to reject the sermon they have preached; when the fact is that it would be at the peril of eternal damnation and delusion to receive it, in nine cases out of ten. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God"—that is, over all that belongs to God—"or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Now let us be careful here. I should not think myself that the temple of God here means the true temple of God—that is, the true Church of God; but the temple of God nominally. The false church in all ages has been thought by the world to be the temple of God; and so this outer court, people take it to be the temple of God. The man of sin sits there, the man that opposeth God's truth, sets the creature over his own eternal affairs, and makes the Lord a mere nothing in the matter. We know that there are systems which we believe most solemnly to be of Satan, and yet millions think that those very systems are the gospel of God, and that the ministers of those systems are the ministers of God, and that the people that follow those systems are the people of God. I cannot, therefore, myself think that this means the true temple of God, but the temple of God nominally. For instance, as a church and congregation—and hundreds of you that are not members with us in church fellowship are yet members of the mystical body of Christ, and you have proved by your conduct the reality of your religion—could not for one moment listen to that that would put down the testimonies that I have just now noticed? We could not do it. Could we admit them? Why, if so the Saviour's words would not be true; for he says the sheep will not follow a stranger; they know the shepherd's voice, and a stranger will they not follow. "So that he as God," says the apostle, "sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God;" that is, I forgive sins, and I transubstantiate the bread and wine; I do this, and that, and the other, and his system thus speaks as though it was God. I think that is one part of the meaning. Of course the expression, "showing himself that he is God," must be understood nominally, because no great man, however he has stood as the representative of a system, is really God; it means, therefore, sitting in the place of God. The next part of the meaning is that the temple of God was the place of God's dwelling; so to sit in the temple of God means to take God's place. God's place is to exercise his sovereignty and his mercy, and to do the things recorded in the latter part of this chapter, 2 Thess. iii. But the man of sin puts God out of his place, and he himself gets into God's place. It is not whom the Lord will bless, but whom I please to bless; not whom the Lord will pardon, but whom I please to pardon. That is what I understand by this system making up the outer court, called the outer court for reasons I need not dwell upon. It is so called because the people are outside of soul trouble, for if they knew what soul trouble was, and were convinced of what their religion is in the sight of God, they would leave their religion directly. Second, they are outside of any understanding of God's truth, and consequently outside of the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant. So that I need not occupy your time in showing why it is called the outer court. Again, it is called "the mystery of iniquity." It is a mystery. You will always find that erroneous systems have this one tendency—to exalt one class of people, called the priesthood, and enslave and subject the other class of people to their dictates, to their authority. What a mysterious thing it is that some of the most educated men and women, both in this country, and other parts of the world, seem to be the most willing slaves to that system that leaves them no exercise of their own private judgment, to that system that leaves them no liberty to judge for themselves. It is all faith and no reason. That is a religion that would not do for me. The Lord saith, "Come, let us reason together;" and the apostle desired to be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men.

I therefore want my faith to be accompanied with a sacred exercise of reason, with a sacred exercise of the understanding of a man. I want to feel that I am an individual; that I am not merely part of a body irrespective of individuality; I must stand in my individuality, and I have to do with God, and God only. "The mystery of iniquity; the man of sin." He may well be called the man of sin; for what sin can equal the deceiving of immortal souls? what sin can equal that which we shall presently have to refer to when we come to the treading down of the holy city? Now, "his coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." Ecclesiastical power, religious and mysterious power over the minds of men. Ah! what a mercy it is, friends, to be delivered therefrom, to cease from man, that our faith may stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And with "signs;" also, as the next word says, "wonders," but they are "lying wonders." And have miracles been pretended to by men? I think they have. Have not vast numbers of conversions been brought about by those very systems which denounced God's truth; and have not the persons connected with those conversions stood and wondered? Here is a number of conversions;—that town is converted; that tribe is converted; that nation is converted. Oh, it is wonderful what we have done. Ah, but what are they converted to? They are signs, but they are not God's signs; they are not signs of life in the soul. There are many, and I must confess I am one of them, that stand amazed at the success of error; the success is wonderful. But then they are lying wonders. They tell a man that if he holds with their system he shall go to heaven. The man blindfolded goes on, and finds at last the truth of this chapter, that that system itself arose from hell, and that all that belong to it are nominated in this chapter the sons of perdition. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Now mind, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" therefore everything contrary to the faith of God's elect is unrighteousness. "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." They profess to belong to God, but they do not love the truth. They receive the letter of the truth, but only to pervert it, only to corrupt it. "We are not as many," saith the apostle, "which corrupt the word of God." If they had received the love of the truth, they would not pervert it, they would not set any of it aside. "And for this cause," as a reward for their blind enmity, "God shall send them," not weak delusion, but "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Look at that! God leaves them to receive a lie. How many men have been raised up providentially to preach delusion. What a wonderful man of God, sir! But "to the law and to the testimony;" to the law of faith and to the testimony of Christ. I care not what his popularity nor what his success may be; I care for none of these; "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word," they may indeed be raised up providentially—that is one thing; to be raised up graciously is another. David distinguishes between the two when he says, "Grant me thy law"—meaning of course the law of life, of faith, of liberty; "grant me thy law graciously," that I may hold the love of the truth, and feel in my soul that I do love the truth. "That they all might be damned"—what an awful, but at the same time righteous declaration;—"that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." A false religion gives a vast amount of pleasure. The power of delusion is wonderful. What numbers have suffered on behalf of delusion. Here then is the outer court. Leave it out, measure it not; do not reckon it part of the temple of God. Now when you read this 2nd chapter of second Thessalonians, where do you think you are? When you come to look at election, can you say, Ah, I have not chosen him, but he hath chosen me and ordained me; and were it not so, there would be no salvation for me.

I know salvation springs out of election; and if there is no election, then there is no sanctification provided for me; and if there is no sanctification, then there will be no being born of an incorruptible seed; and if I am not born of an incorruptible seed, then I am not on my way to heaven, I shall not be saved; I shall not be found at last among the blessed. Oh, then, happy the man that has reason to believe that his eyes have been opened to see where the delusion is, to fly from the same, and to come into the truth as it is in Jesus.

Secondly, I notice *the violence that shall be done to the city of God.* "The holy city shall they tread under foot." I think by treading under foot the holy city four things are meant. First, the crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Was not the crucifying of Christ treading under foot the Son of God? Was not that practically counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing? Was not that practically doing despite to the Spirit of his grace? The second thing meant is the truth of God. Some of you love the Lord in his eternal choice of your soul to eternal glory; and you may depend upon it that your fellow creatures that are not so favoured hate that truth as heartily as you love it, and hate it they will and must, for Satan will not allow them all the time he keeps the palace, all the time he reigns in their souls, to see their condition. He dreads the thought of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shining in unto them. There are plenty of professors who would rather go to a concert, or a theatre, or to some of the lowest places of amusement in London, than they would go where God's truth is. Such is the enmity. Thirdly, it means the people of God. Has not this always been done, and is it not done now? See how the people of God are trodden down by the world. What did they say of the Saviour? Why, he hath a devil; he is mad. Why do you hear him? He is a friend of publicans and harlots. He does not preach practically; he sanctions his disciples plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath day. Do not follow him. Satan worked hard to tread down the truth then, and so he does now. How many thousands of the people of God have been put to death, and their murderers so deluded as to suppose that they were doing God service! Then the fourth thing meant by treading down the city of God is putting down the service of God, and putting something else into the place thereof;—we must not serve God except after their order. But, happy for the people of God, they are brought to know wherein his service consisteth; they see his face, and they shall serve him and him alone, saying, each of them, I will call no man on earth master of my soul, I will call no man on earth the master of my salvation; I will serve God, I will serve him direct: as saith the apostle, "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear." That I think is the meaning of treading down the holy city. Yet I must make one remark here, and that is this, that these outward court people never have been, and never will be, able to so tread down the holy city, the Church of God, as finally to do the slightest injury whatever. There is Jesus Christ, he is not hurt; there are the martyrs in heaven, they are not finally hurt; here are we, we cannot be finally hurt; and there is the service of God, which we shall come to in perfection by and by. "They shall serve him day and night in his temple;" they shall neither hunger nor thirst. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you;" but all those deluded people will, if grace prevent not, certainly most fatally hurt themselves.

Lastly, *the decree of limitation*;—"forty and two months." Now I wish you to understand before I die, and after I am gone, that my opinion is (I will not speak dictatorially, but only humbly), that all these chronograms must be understood in the mystical and figurative sense. None but the Lord himself knows the duration of the times and the seasons, which he hath put in his own power. But we get this comfort from it,

that the enemy is limited. "Thou shalt have tribulation ten days." Here are forty and two months stated, so that the time will come when the enemy must cease, when he must be cast down, and the people of God appear in all the glory of the victories wrought by the Lord who hath redeemed them. I will give you one chronogram, or note of time, in conclusion, the termination of which the Saviour himself, as man when on earth did not know. I am sure, poor creatures as we are, we must all admit that we know infinitely less than he knew, even as man. The chronogram to which I refer is that significant one in the last chapter of the Book of Daniel. "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." Now the daily sacrifice was taken away *de jure*, or by law, legally, not *de facto*, or in actual fact, when the Saviour died, because when the one sacrifice was offered, those sacrifices that instant lost their legal right and their legal power. The instant the Saviour died the daily sacrifice *de jure* was taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate was set up. That abomination was the Pagan power of Rome, and that abomination completed its work in the destruction of Jerusalem. Now the Saviour, in Mark xiii. 32, saith, when speaking of this completeness of the desolation by the Pagan power of Rome, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." It was not yet revealed to the Saviour as man; as God of course he was omniscient, but as man he did not yet know. Then it is said, "Blessed is he that waiteth," —that does not run away. I dare say some of the soldiers of David that went down to the battle said one to the other, I wonder if we shall find poor Mr. Feeble Mind by the stuff when we come back; I wonder if we shall find Mr. Little Faith; I wonder if we shall find Mr. Doubting and Fearing. But when David and his soldiers came back, they found every one had tarried by the stuff; they had not run away. And some that were badly disposed were for making a difference, but David said, "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff;" they shall "part alike." And, to make it all the better, this became a law in Israel from that day. I am glad it did, for, taking it spiritually, I do not know what I should do were it not so. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." Just now it was twelve hundred and ninety days, now it is thirteen hundred and thirty-five days, making forty-five days more. The blessing lay in waiting, and coming to the end of the longer period. That is, if your troubles put an end to your religion, then you do not come to that period; that overcomes the other period. You observe that this is the longer period, and therefore blessed is he that waiteth and overcomes all his troubles. He waits till all the troubles are gone, so that he can say, I have now got no trouble; the twelve hundred and ninety days are gone. I have been enabled to wait till the thirteen hundred and thirty-five days; that is, forty-five days more. My troubles could not conquer me, for I am more than conqueror through him that loved me. Daniel was brought into the right spirit; therefore the Lord said unto him, "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." God make us, then, courageous, enable us still to believe in him, to be of good courage, and he will strengthen our hearts, and we shall see an end to all our troubles.