

Spiritual Ascendency by T. Austin-Sparks

contents

Ch 01 "Who Shall Ascend?"	2
Ch 02 Attainment by Discipline	8
Ch 03 Its Present Bearing on Life	12
Ch 04 The Nature and Motive of Spiritual Ascendency	18
Ch 05 Ascension Union With Christ	23
Ch 06 The Holiness of Zion's Hill	29
Ch 07 The Name of the Lord in Zion	36

From "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1950-1951. Vol. 28-5,6; Vol. 29-1,2,3,4,5.

Chapter 1 - "Who Shall Ascend?" The Question Answered - A Company in Oneness With the Son on Mount Zion - The End in Glory Already Secured in the Lord Jesus - The End Will Justify the Way - The Lamb Standing on Mount Zion - The Company With the Lamb - A Settled Confidence in God

Chapter 2 - Attainment by Discipline Israel as An Illustration of Spiritual Ascendency - Israel's Twelve Tribes A Governing People - Israel Lost What God Intended - Israel's Folly: Clinging to the Letter, Not Open to the Spirit - Ascendency To Be Gained Through Challenging Experiences - Need and Challenge Both Met Through a Disciplined People

Chapter 3 - Its Present Bearing on Life The Hill of the Lord: Christ in Absolute Ascendency - Ascendency: The Normal Outworking of Implanted Divine Life - Israel's Failure: Egypt, Not Zion, in Their Hearts - Egypt Flatters Self, Zion Slays It - Ambition Right If Selfless - Holy Ambition: To Attain to Zion

Chapter 4 - The Nature and Motive of Spiritual Ascendency The Challenge of Ascendency - Ascendency A Right Ambition - Testing of Motive, The Lord or Self? - Ascendency Demands Spiritual Stamina - Ascendency Acquired in Common Affairs - Service the Motive of Ascendency - Ascendency Persistently Assailed

Chapter 5 - Ascension Union With Christ A New Order Introduced With the Ascension of Christ - The Ascension of Christ, His Enthronement - The Church in Ascension Union With Christ - Some in Israel a Testimony for Israel - A Testimony to the Greatness of Redemption - A Testimony to the Lord's Persistent Working - A Testimony to the Glorious Consummation

Chapter 6 - The Holiness of Zion's Hill Ascendency Over the Enemy - Ascendency Over Our Own Souls - Power with God - Zion the Place of Spiritual Power - Holiness Basic to Spiritual Power - The Defilement of Self-interest - The Defilement of an Earth Touch - Encouragement to Perseverance

Chapter 7 - The Name of the Lord in Zion A Present Foretaste of Glory - A Process Begun - Zion the Embodiment of the Name - The Need to Recover the Authority of the Name - The Need to Get On to Higher Ground - God Governs by Spiritual Maturity - The Power of the

Name

Ch 01 "Who Shall Ascend?"

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” (Ps. 24:3).

“And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish” (Rev. 14:1-5).

The Question Answered

You will, I think, recognize that these two passages constitute question and answer. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place?” The answer — “I saw the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand.” The beginning and the end; the anticipation, the realization; the question, the answer.

In the Psalms, as you know, we have a context which very closely corresponds to what is in the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation. Psalm 22 portrays the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — words which, as we know, were later wrung from the Saviour’s lips as He hung upon the tree (Mark 15:34). The answer to that Why? is in Revelation 14. Then in Psalm 23 we see Him as the Great Shepherd in resurrection, and again there is the answering voice from the New Testament — “The God of peace brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant” (Heb. 13:20). In Psalm 24 He is the Chief Shepherd; and again the answering voice — “When the chief shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4). There is the whole story, the story of the Cross, the story of the sheep and the Shepherd. Although the metaphor does change in Rev. 14 and it is the Lamb Who is referred to and not the Shepherd, nevertheless the flock idea is preserved and He is found in that identification with the rest — the Lamb, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand. So you see that in this first meditation we are really stepping right over to the end, and it is the end that we are going to contemplate now in a few simple statements.

A Company in Oneness With the Son on Mount Zion

What is the end? Well, so far as God’s determination is concerned, it is that there shall be at least a company which has been brought into the utmost oneness with His Son. “THESE are they that follow the Lamb WHITHERSOEVER he goeth,” and in their nature and

character and fellowship, oneness is complete. I think that, superficially, is what is represented by the Lamb on mount Zion. It is not the whole story, it does not cover the whole ground of redemption. As you notice in the context, there will be others brought out of the great vintage. But these are a “firstfruits unto God,” and they seem to me to say quite definitely that God will have a company which answers to His Son in fullness. That is the end, and everything else will be bound up with that and will hang upon that. All creation is now fixed upon this company. It is the heart of things.

Why? For what purpose? That is not the object of our present consideration, but how much is bound up with that! It is a focal point, it is the heart of things, it is that which brings God His first complete satisfaction in His people. The very phrase “firstfruits UNTO GOD” is significant. It is not my interest or concern to speak about firstfruits at this time, but what this represents for the heart of God does concern us pre-eminently, and the picture in itself is very forceful.

You know quite well that in every realm of cultivation where the husbandman has laboured and had long patience, day by day as the time draws near he moves about eagerly looking for the first signs of an answer to his labours, his toils, his longings, his waitings, his anxieties. The day comes when he has enough to assure him that it has not been in vain. He gathers it as a token of what is yet to be. He finds his heart satisfaction in the first place in that first gathering, the firstfruits. I think that is just what this means, that God gets His first satisfaction in that which is here brought before us. All that that means requires more time than we can give to it at the moment. But that is the one great hour towards which everything is moving, and a great hour it will indeed be.

Then, of course, we have to bring that right into our own midst, to challenge our own hearts with it and ask whether that great hour and all that it means may not be implicit in our own being led to contemplate this matter at this time. May not our meditation, in the intention of God, be related to the realization of that something which is fully to God’s satisfaction? I think we would desire it to be so. Our hearts would respond and say, Yes, may it be so, and I feel that we are not presumptuous in saying it is so, in so far as we, a mere fragment of the whole though we be, are concerned with that great vision. The Lamb standing on mount Zion with the hundred and forty-four thousand has meaning for us, which we must consider and heed.

The End in Glory Already Secured in the Lord Jesus

If that is so, then there are certain things which you and I must believe. Everyone who belongs to the Lord and stands in the light of His full purpose of redemption must believe, firstly, that the end in glory and victory is secured unto us in the Lord Jesus now. That end requires nothing to be done so far as the security is concerned; it is accomplished and finished. Surely the thing which ought to stir the deepest note of worship and praise in our hearts is just this, that the end is secure. It is secured in glory.

To put that in another way is to say that a glorious end is secured for the people of God. From God’s standpoint there needs to be nothing done to make the end more glorious than has already been done. That of course is the simple fundamental basis of our faith in the Lord Jesus, but nevertheless the ground of continual challenge and conflict. So far as God’s work is concerned, the Lamb does stand now on mount Zion with the hundred and forty-four thousand; it is secured. Oh, that the Lord would get that more definitely, abidingly

settled in the hearts of His people! It is the only ground of real rest, assurance, steadiness of life and of joy. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps. 11:3); and if that foundation in any way be shaken, then everything topples and falls. In this matter we need be no “futurists”; we must be experimentalists. The Lamb does stand, for all divine intents and purposes, upon mount Zion with that secured company. The end in glory and the victory IS secured in Christ.

The End Will Justify the Way

But another thing which we must believe — which if necessary we must battle to believe — is that the end will fully justify the way, and God will be fully vindicated in the way by which He has led us. That is more difficult. It touches us at so many points. It is not easy to believe that the experiences of this life, the ways by which the Lord leads us, all that which from time to time makes our very foundations rock — the suffering, the affliction, the disappointment, the sorrow, the perplexity, the bewilderment, yes, and everything else which comes into these lives which have been given to God — it is not easy to believe that the day is coming when we shall say positively and definitely, “God made no mistake, He knew what He was doing, and He did the right thing!” In face of all you are passing through, the whole state of your life just now, it is difficult perhaps to believe that all that is right, precisely right. The end is going to justify the way, to vindicate God’s dealing with us. At the end we shall say positively: “God made no mistakes!” In little ways in our lives, when we have passed through trying ordeals, deep and dark experiences, and have come out at the other end into the meaning of it, we have been able to say, “I would not have been without it for anything; I am glad I had the experience.” And yet while we were going through it, the very last thing we would have said would have been that. The afterwards strangely transforms the whole thing. In the issue we say, “After all, it was not so wrong as I thought it was: it was right!”

This company called the hundred and forty-four thousand (do not be too literal about that, we shall have something to say about that presently), has been purchased from among men. They went through it as no others ever went through it, they met the first force of the scorching sun to ripen them, they pioneered this way and they knew what tasting the sufferings of the Lamb means. I cannot but believe that when this company stands on mount Zion with the Lamb, the one thing they will say will be, “He knew what He was doing with us. It was right. Now we would not be without the experience for anything, this justifies all. Although sometimes we were tempted to question God as to whether He was handling us the right way, whether He was being quite fair with us, we can see now, in the light of the issue, that it was not only right, but it was the only thing! Nothing else would have done.”

We have to seek grace from God to get there as far as we can now, and believe that God is no mere spectator of our sufferings and trials and adversities, looking on, coldly watching, but that He has the whole thing in hand. “He knoweth the way that I take”: but He is not just a spectator. According to Job, who knew something about it, that is the verdict: “He performeth that which is appointed for me: and many such things are with him” (Job 23:10,14).

Now go back over the first chapters of the book of Job and see the thing that is appointed for him, and which God knows. “Ye... have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is

full of pity, and merciful” (James 5:11). That word covers the case of Job.

We are dealing with very difficult things. It is easy to say and to hear words like these, but we have to strengthen ourselves and one another in the Lord for all that it means to reach that glorious consummation. One of the ways in which we can do that is simply to say to one another: “We believe God so thoroughly that we affirm that even in the most difficult situations He will be justified in the end. We shall say to Him: ‘Thou wast right, I would not have been without the experience for anything’.” Some of you perhaps cannot imagine yourselves saying that, but we are all going to say that in the end, if only we will not break faith with God. The end will justify the way and vindicate God.

The Lamb Standing on Mount Zion

The terms of this passage in Revelation 14 are themselves significant and indicate things. “I saw... the Lamb...” That at once signifies suffering and sacrifice. “And with him a hundred and forty and four thousand... purchased.” These are not only redeemed ones; these have been brought into a very close fellowship with what that very title, the Lamb, means — suffering, sacrifice. It is going to be that to bring about such a oneness as is here indicated.

“Standing on the mount Zion.” This is a place which occupies a very great prominence throughout the Word of God, and it always signifies the highest point and peak of attainment. It is the realization of all aspirations. “Whither the tribes go up” (Ps. 122:4) There are many references to mount Zion, and it is a very, very conspicuous thing in the Scriptures. It always suggests some object of highest ambition, strongest aspiration, and, to be there, the gratification of the deepest desire of the life. You know how in Israel’s life mount Zion stood as the one object of constant thought and desire. We may say more about that, but here is a place of attainment of the highest possible realization and accomplishment. The Lamb has achieved it, He has secured it. He stands there like a mighty Victor over all that which sought to impede His upward movement; from the very depths of hell, up, up, ever up through successive realms until He attained the highest place in glory and stands upon mount Zion triumphant in the full accomplishment of victory. It is a symbolic way of saying what Paul puts in direct spiritual language: “He raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph. 1:20-21). “Far above all!” “...the Lamb standing on the mount Zion”: a tremendous achievement, a tremendous victory! He is there! It has cost a lot to get there, to achieve that eminence, but He is there. “And with him...” . It is a picture of the full realization of the greatest possibilities of human destiny in the divine counsels.

Mount ZION! Well, Zion itself again adds to the implication. Zion means stronghold, fortress. It was literally the mount Zion in Jerusalem that was the point of the greatest challenge ever issued to the people of God. That fortress of the Jebusites held out for centuries. Even Joshua never subdued it. It retained its strength and resistance through the whole four hundred years of the Judges and went right on in a long, long history of impregnability, till David came to the throne. Then when David was at last made king, the first challenge to his men was about Jebus, this stronghold of the Jebusites, who were so sure of their position and who lived so much upon their history that they said, “We can put the lame and the blind to defend this, that is all it requires!” But they had now to meet a new factor, which is another subject. David was king, and that changed the situation, and it

was not long before Joab assailed and stormed that stronghold and it became the city of David, the great king, and the glorious story, the other side of the story of Zion, commenced. Zion was the very heart of all glory and a stronghold indeed.

Interpret that in spiritual language and meaning. See what it means for the LAMB to stand upon mount Zion. What a victory, what a strength, what a position, what an achievement, what a standing! How impregnable is that position: to come to finality where there is not a foe left that can raise a finger to challenge the position, so great is the accomplishment of the Lamb! And so glorious will be the position to which He will bring us on mount Zion.

The Company With the Lamb

(a) Selected

“And with him a hundred and forty and four thousand.” We have said we must not be too literal about that. That will be a very great company literally out of all, but it is only a significant number; that is, it implies certain things. Firstly, it implies selectiveness, there is no doubt about it; but not selectiveness upon merit, and not selectiveness upon foreordination. But it means that God has seen here a people who have gone further with Him, who have answered more fully to His heart than many, and He has made them what is here called a firstfruits unto Himself, He has gathered them into this accomplishment of Christ; and the real value of that is found in the vocation which they will fulfil. That is not for our present consideration, we shall come to it probably some other time. But this company is to fulfil a tremendous vocation in the ages to come. It is the way in which they are going to serve the Lord that makes for their value to the Lord. And they are chosen. I do not like the word “selected,” for I know all that circles round that word and has been crystallized into a doctrine. But leave all that and just take the fact itself. They are a selected company; they do stand in the thought of God as a company peculiarly precious to Him, because of how they satisfy Him and can serve Him.

(b) Representative

They are — and here is our safeguard — not only selected but representative. It would be a poor thing if all the harvest were only the firstfruits. I do not think any husbandman would be very satisfied if his whole harvest were just what he got in firstfruits. The rest follows. Here it is representative, and that great divine thought of representation is found throughout the Word of God. The Lord is always seeking to get something which will lead the way and serve those who will follow and, by their relatedness to all others, be a ministry of greater fullness to them. That is the thought — to be a ministry of greater fullness. That is a principle working out in us, perhaps, every day. Why does the Lord take us through these exceedingly hot fires of trial? The answer is, that others may benefit. It is to pioneer the way for others. Of course it raises the question: What are you going to be content with? Are you really set upon following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? You see, none of these words or phrases used here is to be taken merely literally. Not that the literal side of them is ruled out — “in their mouth was found no lie,” and so on — but it is not just the literal thing; it represents a separateness unto God from every kind of worldly contamination. Lots of things are involved in this. Why should we be so utter? There are plenty of Christians who will get to heaven all right who do not go this way and do not have this experience. The answer is that God is after a representative company. The answer to all such problems is just that. Those concerned have no reason to consider themselves

more important than others. It is too costly, far too costly, ever to be on a pedestal. Those who go this way are going to be thoroughly emptied and undone in themselves, they are going to know the fellowship of His sufferings. That will take all spiritual conceit out of them. They are not the elite in their own eyes; anything but that. Their cry will often be, “I am a worm, and no man” (Ps. 22:6). It will be with them as with Job “Wherefore I abhor myself” (Job 42:6). That is the cry of the hundred and forty-four thousand: poor specimens in their own eyes, but God has bound up with them values for others. That is where He finds so much joy and satisfaction in them, and that is where eventually they will find their gratification — to be able to serve the Lord for others, to be in a position to do it. Now that does not belong to some mystical day when the Lamb stands upon mount Zion; that belongs to now; we are right in it. The question of that position of ascendancy and of our usefulness to someone else is bound up with every trial through which we pass now, every sorrow of this present hour. Believe me, this is all present in a spiritual way. There will be a consummation, there will be an issue. I do not know that I expect to see a literal fulfilment of this — it does not concern us just now — but I know that the spiritual reality is grim and desperate and terrific in this present life. It is here now. Where do you stand? Are you down there or up here spiritually? That determines your usefulness to others. Are you under or are you above? Are you grovelling, or are you in ascendancy with the Lamb, knowing victory? That determines how far you can be used by the Lord to minister to others now. Revelation 14 is a spiritual matter. The company is representative in order to serve the Lord.

A Settled Confidence in God

Just this closing word. We must seek to believe in our hearts that the dealings of God with us are always suited by Him to the object which He has in view. That is the realm of mystery for us, but it is true. What I mean is this — that the more understanding we have of God’s ways, the more we shall realize that the ways He has taken with us were the only ways, so far as we were concerned, which would reach His end. With others He would have to adopt other ways. Our ways with the Lord are very lonely ways because they are just ours alone, apparently. Many may have gone the same way, but when you go through things under the hand of the Lord it is to you as though no one had ever been that way before, you are alone in it. There are many ways in which the Lord deals with us which are peculiar to us, and they are the only ways by which He could reach His end in our case. You see, the Lord does not always tell us why He withholds or forbids or takes things away, why He does not give us what we ask for and want, or why He takes from us something that we would cling to. He does not tell us why, but He does know this one thing about us, namely, **HOW VERY MUCH WE CAN BE OUR OWN ENEMIES**. We want something; the Lord withholds it. If we had it, it would do us utmost harm. We would cling to something. The Lord takes it away. He knows that our continued possession of it would do us harm, and that our own desire in realization would make our desire our enemy. He knows all that. Some of you have had experience enough to look back and see where your heart was set upon something, and the Lord either did not let you have it or He took it away, at the time you went through the depths. Today you thank God with all your heart that He never let you have that. You say today, “I can see what mischief that would have done, and how good the Lord was in causing me pain then.” This is not fiction, this is true. We have to believe that the Lord’s methods with us are suited to His object, and He knows exactly what He is doing. Oh, do ask the Lord for grace to believe that. We must, because while we have a controversy with the Lord, feeling hard toward Him, He cannot get on with what He is

after. It is only when we get through by grace and say, “Well, Lord, I do not understand at all, it all seems to me to be such a contradiction, but Thou knowest what Thou art doing, and Thou knowest this is the only way in which Thou canst reach Thine end where I am concerned, and I trust Thee about it.” If only we could get there, how quickly the Lord would bring through to the place where He could supply our need in such a way as would really facilitate the realization of His purposes in our lives. I know how difficult a thing I am saying to you, but these things are true. Remember that the Lord always holds before His people His best and never a second best. There is an alternative, there is something else, but the Lord never tells us about a second, He never refers to the less. He never says, “This is My first, but you can have this other if you like.” The Lord always keeps the first in view for His people, and all that He has to say to them is about the first. His warnings are lest they should miss that. His exhortations and urgings and appealings are concerned with the first. He does not make provision for our low standards. He gives us no assurance that, if we do not go right on to the hundred and forty-four thousand, it will not matter.

And is that not exactly what Paul was thinking of and reaching after when he wrote to the Philippians, “One thing I do” (Phil. 3:13)? “I have not two things in mind so that if I should at any time feel inclined not to be quite so out-and-out I can have my alternative.” No! “One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” The answer is here on mount Zion, with all that it means to be there with the Lamb.

Ch 02 Attainment by Discipline

Reading: Ps. 24:3; Rev. 14:1-5

We will say right away what it is that is really in view, so that you see what we are working unto. In a word it is this — that God has always had in His mind and eye a people in absolute ascendancy. You can change the word ascendancy for other words if you like, such as dominion, exaltation, and so on. But ascendancy is a very good word, and I think it will suit our purpose; a people in absolute ascendancy.

That thought immediately resolves itself into a key to all the Scriptures. It explains everything that is there. The Bible is not just the record of numerous happenings, the story of many lives, or something about many nations. No; these all centre in one thing, and that is this — a people corresponding to God’s mind in the matter of absolute ascendancy, and what that means spiritually. That is a large enough matter.

In this closing book, at the point at which we have read (Rev. 14), we have a culmination of divine purpose. We have the question of ascendancy answered in one called “the Lamb,” and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand. The question has dated from a point long before David raised it in this form — “Who shall ascend... who shall stand...?” That question has rung down the ages from the day that Adam let the whole matter of ascendancy with regard to this world go into the hands of the devil. Who SHALL ascend, who SHALL have the dominion, who SHALL be above and who SHALL stand when all has crashed in the fall? That question at last is answered here, as the voice is heard as of many waters, as of a great thunder, as of harpers harping with their harps, and the Lamb and

those that are with Him are seen on mount Zion. That is, as we pointed out in our previous meditation, the place of final impregnability so far as the forces of evil are concerned. The answer is there.

The answer, again, is found in a representative company. In saying that, we immediately introduce a new factor into the whole situation. Why do we, as the Lord's people, gather together? Is it that we are just a number of Christians who love the Lord and delight to come together from time to time to have some meetings and some teaching, and generally to help one another to be better Christians? I am quite sure that most of you answer No to such a question. You have seen that there is something very much more bound up with our belonging to the Lord than just being Christians, and good Christians at that. You have seen that God has a purpose concerning His Son into which believers are called, and which has only its beginning in our being born again. That purpose of God has been the occasion of intense and unrelenting hostility right down the ages from the whole kingdom of evil. It is the object which lies at the end of the Christian life upon which those powers of evil have their attention focused. If they are against the beginnings of Christian life in new birth, if they are against any and every stage of the Christian life, and if increasing intensity of opposition faces any believer who determines to go further and still further with the Lord, it is all because of what these things mean as to their outcome. The matter becomes individual and personal only because we are a part of a whole; but the whole is not to be found in any individual or any number of individuals as such, but in one united people.

Israel as an Illustration of Spiritual Ascendency

Whatever we find recorded historically in the Bible, whatever we find there relating to what is actually here on this earth, seen and tangible and known after the flesh, there is a spiritual counterpart to it. It is a representation of something not seen. And amongst the many things which fulfil that function, one of the greatest is the nation of Israel; something known in history, seen on the earth, but in the mind of God hiding a great spiritual intent. That ultimate intent in fullness is contained in a little statement in Deuteronomy 28:1 and 13: "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments which I command thee this day... the Lord thy God will set thee on high ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS of the earth... And the Lord will make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be ABOVE only, and thou shalt not be beneath." There is the secret of God lying within that vessel which illustrates God's thought. The thought is passed on in spiritual reality to the church, which is the spiritual Israel, and the very explanation of the existence of the church according to God's mind is just that — a nation above all the nations, a people in absolute spiritual ascendency. "Who shall ascend?" The answer is found there, in the thought and mind of God.

That thought will most certainly be realized, but in the first place it may only be realized in a representative company, of which these hundred and forty-four thousand are the expression. Oh, what a vast amount of the Word of God is opened up immediately you get that key! It brings in the whole history of Israel. It starts with Jacob, the man through whom the twelve tribes came. The whole history of Israel is wrought into that one man's spiritual experience. What is Jacob to begin with, before he actually comes under the disciplining hand of God? Well, he is just what the nation was in itself; a poor, miserable, wretched, contemptible thing. "The Lord did not... choose you because ye were more in number than any people" (Deut. 7:7); "He did not choose you because you were better than

other people:” No, it was sovereign choice, and that is all you can say about Jacob. If you want anything to commend the man, you will look in vain; and you will find plenty to the contrary. But that worm Jacob came into the sovereign hands of God, and from Jacob the supplanter, the mean, contemptible worm — God made a prince. He changed his name to Israel — a prince with God — and gave him twelve sons and what a mixture they were! We dare not stay at the moment with the details. But here we have twelve sons, twelve tribes.

Israel’s Twelve Tribes — A Governing People

What does twelve signify? Twelve in the Bible represents government. The twelve stones taken out of the Jordan, and the twelve stones set up in the Jordan (Josh. 4:8,9) speak of ascendancy over death, death’s subjection to the power of resurrection. (That is an absolute thing in the very existence of the people we are thinking about). Elijah on Carmel built an altar of twelve stones, definitely said to represent all the tribes of Israel, and that altar bore witness concerning the absolute ascendancy of Jehovah and His people.

Many things happened to the twelve tribes. Dan lets in idolatry and passes out of history (see Rev. 7), but someone else takes the place of Dan and twelve is preserved to Revelation 21. “The holy city... having twelve gates... and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.” The number is preserved right through to the end. You need not think historically now; think spiritually. Twelve is government in representation. One hundred and forty-four thousand (twelve times twelve) are seen on the mount. This speaks of government, complete, absolute, ascendent, transcendent — you come into the realm of superlatives now — through the Lamb.

So you could go on gathering it up, and seeing how this divine thought is wrought into the very fabric of the Scriptures. From start to finish, it is all centred in the challenging enquiry, “Who shall ascend...? Who shall stand...?” Who shall have the government of God’s universe at last? Who shall be His governmental instrument and vessel in reigning over this universe? Who? “Thou madest him to have dominion” (Ps. 8:6). “We behold... Jesus crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:9) “Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet” (Heb. 2:8). “He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22,23). From the head the government passes out to the universe through the church, which is His body. It is all of a piece.

Israel Lost What God Intended

What a lot this explains in spiritual experience! I am going to pause there before I go on. This represents the big difference amongst Christians, the difference of conception as to the Christian life, as to what we are here for. Israel met many temptations and things adverse to this great destiny. Eventually Israel forfeited the destiny, and they are scattered among the nations, and have lost what God intended, so far as this dispensation is concerned. That did not just happen. There were many reasons for it and those are exactly the same things that you and I have to encounter and beware of in our calling unto this great destiny. For although God will achieve His purpose in the end, it will be achieved in a representative company, and all Christians will not reach this end. If it were otherwise, why the conflict, why all the exhortations, the entreaties, the urgings, the warnings of the Word of God to CHRISTIANS? Why do we not just — automatically come to it? What is all the trouble about, if after all it does not matter, since we shall reach the goal in any case?

You see how absurd it is to take it for granted that willy-nilly, once you are a Christian, you are going to arrive at God's full purpose. You are not! Israel, even though they were called and had God on their side, and every divine resource at their command for the realization of the end, encountered things that proved too powerful for them and were worsted in the fight. They are used again and again as a warning to the church. The things which caused that downfall are the things of which we have to be fully aware, and although they are not pleasant things to say, they have to be said — in all faithfulness.

Israel's Folly — Clinging to the Letter, Not Open to the Spirit

One of the inclusive enemies to the great purpose of God in Israel's life and which virtually brought about their downfall was this: that they gathered all the truths of God together into a well-defined, compact system of sayings and practices, and said, "That is everything and the end." They boxed the compass of divine revelation and said, "We have it all, and now it is just a matter of observing these sayings and these forms." They resolved the whole revelation of God into a formal teaching and practice. They failed to see that the essence of all divine things is divine life; that there is a vast difference between the letter and the spirit; that you can have all the letter and all the forms and yet be quite dead, and all of it profit you nothing. Their attitude amounted to this, that if anybody claims to see something more of the meaning of the Lord — not claiming to have had fresh revelation from heaven, but to have seen something more of God's meaning in what has already been given in His Word, demanding adjustment, demanding fresh progress, perhaps demanding revolutionary things — then that is unsafe, it is suspect, it is something outside of what WE hold, what WE have been taught, what WE believe. They shut it all down like that and barred the way to all spiritual progress. That is what Israel did, and it was this that the Son of God came up against. It was this very thing that put out of court all the purpose of His coming and rendered it nil, so far as they were concerned.

Think of the story of our Lord's trial before Pilate. Where are our sympathies, and where are our indignations? Our sympathies are with Pilate, the man who said, as he took water and washed his hands, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man" (Matt. 27:24). He was a man in a predicament. You may despise him for apparent weakness, but in comparison with those who said, "Give us Barabbas, and let Jesus be crucified; His blood be on us, and on our children", it is Pilate who commands our sympathy, not these others. We feel more with the world than with the church. That is strong language. I mean, our sympathy is more there with the world than it is with those who claim to know everything, to be in possession of everything, of divine truth. In its hostility to Christ the world is nothing in comparison with a dead, fixed, systematized Christianity... That is where the danger lies; of having all the truth, and all the articles and all the practices, and losing the throne. Beware "that no one take thy crown" along that line.

That compasses a very great deal. It is for us to look carefully again at the things which brought about Israel's downfall and robbed Israel of that great and glorious issue which God had set before them. "The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth" (Deut 28:1). Satan's answer to that is, "If I can help it, never!"; and he resorts to every means and method to see that no seed comes to final spiritual ascendancy. No church will arrive at ultimate dominion if he can prevent it.

Ascendency To Be Gained Through Challenging Experiences

It is that throne which is the centre of the universe, it is that glorious throne on high which rules, which governs. It is governing the experience of every believer. That is to say, it is determining our temptations, the assaults which we meet. As members of Christ's Body, our trials and sufferings are not things in themselves. It is a part of the mischief which the enemy has done in us, in numbing our spiritual faculties and blinding our eyes, that we regard the things that happen to us as personal things. It is one of the most devastating things to take our sufferings as merely personal things. By so doing we rob them of their point and meaning. So soon as we begin to turn in on ourselves and regard our sufferings as directed against ourselves, making the whole thing into a personal problem, we have lost the way to the throne. If you see a person who is continually occupied with his own troubles, all the time in the circle of his own sufferings, one who has made altogether a personal matter of this whole question of discipline and training, of the trying, testing and proving of faith, you can see at once that such a one has cut the very vitals of divine intention in his trial and suffering; he is a defeated person. If only we could take up the trials, the adversities, the sufferings, the problems, that come to us, and look at them in the light of the great end, as the rungs of a ladder for our feet to rise to the throne! It is the ladder of suffering to bring us to the throne. It is the LAMB Who is in the throne, it is suffering and sacrifice that bring to mount Zion. Yet we resolve such trial into a personal thing all the time and defeat the end by so doing.

Do not be consumed with self-pity. See what it is doing. It is giving the enemy the ground he wants for holding you in defeat. You are no good for anything whatever; your phraseology about victory counts for nothing. Until we take hold of our affliction and suffering and say, "This thing has got to bring me higher, I have to get it under my feet: God has given me a good opportunity to learn ascendancy by means of this"; until we take an attitude like that our affliction and suffering is working just in the opposite direction to what God intends.

"These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). That is said of another company in this book, and though the company may be different the principle is the same. When God gets a representative company there in the throne it will be in virtue, not of sovereign acts of picking them up and putting them there, but of a mighty travail; but not a travail in which they have wallowed in self-pity but in which they have risen by the grace of God and gained ascendancy.

Do not literalize these things and, by so doing, vitiate them. Get rid of the literal conception of a mountain and a throne and a hundred and forty-four thousand, and crowns and elders and what not. See that it is symbolic language which enshrouds spiritual principles. It is all spiritual in nature and essence; and spiritual ascendancy, or coming to the throne, is something that is to be effected inside of us, not at some future date but now. Any day in the life of a child of God will provide plenty of material for determining whether he, or she, is coming to the throne or not. Do not wait for the great day when Satan shall be cast down from heaven and there shall no place be found for him any more. Let us ask the Lord to see that in the measure that is done today. The heavens may be geographical, but they are spiritual also. That is what is before us, that is what the Lord is after: not merely to have a number of Christians, and as good Christians as He can get, but to have a people who will come to that place where the answer will be given fully and finally, both to the question and to the challenge — "Who shall ascend...?"

Need and Challenge Both Met Through A Disciplined People

We referred in our earlier meditation to Job, and we will for the present close with a reference to him. Job's was a tremendous climb up out of a miry condition, up and out into that place of vindication where the Lord could point to him in a new way and say to others, "This man is the key to the answer to your prayers and you will not get any answer to prayer unless he stands in the breach: your spiritual interests and destiny hang upon him." That is tremendous: that a man should have reached some specific point where the destiny of many others hangs upon him, and God has determined it and said it in so many words — "Your spiritual good is bound up with this man; I have had to bring him to this position for your sake." It was a climb up: and what a climb up and out it was for Job!

What was God doing in all this? He was answering a challenge from hell. In effect, if not in word, the challenge of Satan was, "Who shall ascend? Who shall stand? Let me touch Job and You will see whether he will stand or not, You will see whether he will come up or not." And God said, "I will answer that challenge by means of this man." The challenge was answered. May it not be that this is exactly what the Lord is doing by means of the church? Why has Satan been allowed to continue for these centuries? Why was he not wiped out of existence when Christ destroyed his power at Calvary? Why has the church suffered through the ages as she has? Why today are the people of God so oppressed and afflicted? God is answering the enemy, and in that company on mount Zion with the Lamb the answer will be fully found. These have ascended and these shall stand. It yet remains, of course, to see what is basic to that standing and that ascendancy. That is spiritual history, but we have the fact of what God is after, what it is that alone will satisfy His intentions from the beginning. "Who shall ascend? Who shall stand?" Mount Zion and what that means spiritually will be the answer. And the apostle says, "Ye are come unto mount Zion... the church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:22,23). It is the same thing.

Ch 03 Its Present Bearing on Life

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" (Ps. 24:3).

"Thou shalt bring them in, plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex. 15:17).

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand" (Rev. 14:1).

The great question of the ages, we have said, is this: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?". The answer is found, in the first instance, in those who are called "firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4); in a representative company, symbolically (not literally but symbolically) said to be one hundred and forty-four thousand. We indicated the significance of that number in our previous meditation.

Of course, our first business must be to identify "the hill of the Lord". It is not something new to most of you when I say that as there is spiritual history behind literal history in the Bible, and spiritual geography behind literal geography, and so on, so it is with this place

called “the hill of the Lord”. What I mean is that in the Bible everything has a double meaning, and things which are seen, which are visible and tangible and palpable, are used to indicate a counterpart which is spiritual. The Bible is full of history, but you know how that history is all a portrayal of something spiritual that is going on. Events and happenings have behind them spiritual meanings. Even in the physiological realm of our bodies this is so. They are used to suggest and indicate spiritual principles. And when we come to the geography of the Bible, perhaps it is more patent than anywhere else. Think of all the place names which have not merely taken on a symbolism, but which do actually represent something spiritual that has happened or does happen there. For instance, “Bethel” (which means “the house of God”) is not just a name given to a place, but something happened there which had implicit in it all the spiritual meaning of the house of God. When Jacob came first to Bethel and laid down there that night to rest, the heavens opened. In his dream he saw a ladder, and upon it communications were set in operation between heaven and earth, and God above it began to speak to him, telling him of His covenant. If all that does not really mean to us the house of God in a spiritual way, well, we have not seen the house of God yet. For the spiritual house of God is surely this, that it is something which LINKS heaven and earth and through which the communications of God are brought to men. This implies that there are those on the earth who have an opened heaven and who have entered into the blessings of the covenant; and very much more than that. That is Bethel. It is not just a name; it means something spiritual which was borne out by the experience of a man. We could go on dealing with place names, showing that, while you have come upon a name, a place, you have come upon something more than that. You have come upon some divine thought, divine principle, divine law, something in the mind of God. When you get behind the thing seen you are encountering something which, though unseen, is eternal, mighty, tremendous. So that places, mountains, valleys, and all that have to do with geography, have a spiritual meaning in the Bible.

The Hill of the Lord — Christ in Absolute Ascendency

Here, then, is “the hill of the Lord”. We have to identify that hill, first literally and then spiritually. It does not take very long to do that because the Psalms almost open with the identity of the hill of the Lord. “Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Ps. 2:6). “My holy hill of Zion” is, historically and literally, the hill of the Lord.

What, then, is Zion spiritually? Do you remember that that second Psalm was quoted right at the beginning of the church’s history? When the earthly forces set themselves in array against the Lord and against His anointed ones, the latter met in prayer and quoted that Psalm, and the place where they were assembled was shaken (Acts 4). The very shaking of heaven came into that place. What did it say? You have touched the holy hill of Zion! Where is that? The Lord Jesus is ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It is the place of absolute ascendancy, victory, power. Who is Lord now? “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed... Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion”.

Zion, then, is not a place on the earth: Zion has now resolved itself into the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ at God’s right hand. Thus the apostle writes, “Ye are come unto mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem... the... church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb. 12:22-23). It is no longer a place, it is a spiritual position. That is Zion, and we have identified the holy hill.

Who shall ascend? Who shall stand? You see, this is a present question. While the consummation of this lies at the end of the way, it is something which has a present bearing upon the life of the Lord's people. Let me say in fuller definition that Zion, or the holy hill of the Lord, spiritually embodies all that divine thought which the people of God will express when He has them, as He will have them, wholly according to His will. In other words — when God gets a people where He has ever determined to have them, He will have them in what is the spiritual counterpart of Zion — absolute ascendancy over all other powers.

Ascendancy — The Normal Outworking of Implanted Divine Life

That divine thought begins in a very simple way. It begins by the implanting and imparting of divine life.

“Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God; He Whose word cannot be broken, formed thee for His own abode”.

The psalm upon which that hymn is constructed makes comparisons between other great cities and places of world fame. “I will make mention of Rahab” (that is, of Egypt) “and Babylon... Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia”; and men were saying, “This one and that one was born there, and is proud of it”. But “of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her”. “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob... this one was born there” (Ps. 87). It is in birth that the beginnings of God's thought about Zion take place. By the receiving of divine life we have inherent in us all the power of this mighty spiritual ascendancy which in the end, if it is not thwarted, will bring into the throne.

I say that for this reason among others, that what we are talking about is not something extra to and altogether apart from the normal course of Christian life. It cannot be argued that to be a Christian and a simple disciple of the Lord Jesus, a lover of Christ, is one thing, but this is something else. Not at all! It is an entirely confused mind which thinks like that. This is the normal outworking of that life which every born-again child of God possesses, if that life is allowed to work out normally. If you stop short, if you do not go on beyond a certain point, if you become contented too soon, if you become turned aside, if you allow yourself to be prejudiced, disaffected, influenced by anything that prevents you from going right on, you have intercepted the normal course of the divine life which is in you. If you will accept all that is involved (and it is following the Lamb wherever He goes, which means suffering and sacrifice), if you will give the Lord implicit obedience, if you will trust Him where you cannot understand Him, if you will allow Him to do all that He wants to do with you, your normal course will be to arrive at the throne; that is, to come to absolute spiritual ascendancy. We are not seeking to put something extra upon Christians, but to say to Christians, “This is your birthright”.

We were speaking earlier about Jacob. To return to him for a moment: whatever there was about Jacob, he did see that in the birthright the place of ascendancy was found, and so it came to be that he gained the place of ascendancy. Eventually he became a prince with God, the father of the twelve tribes, the governmental body in God's electing thought, the foreshadowing of the hundred and forty and four thousand, the twelve times twelve a thousand times over. It is all implicit in the birthright. No one has any particular favouritism in the matter of the birthright. No one is elect to the birthright; that is, no one is elect to salvation. If we are elect, it is according to the PURPOSE of salvation. That is

another subject. The point here is that it is right there in the gift of eternal life at new birth that the throne is implicit, that ascendancy is found. Well, it works out in that way, at any rate, and we must remember that this divine life is not something abstract, but personal; it is the Spirit of life Himself.

And what does the Holy Spirit do with a life in which He has a free, full way? Well, He never allows that life to drop down on to low levels without the one concerned knowing it. You know quite well, in the very simplicity of your relationship with the Lord Jesus from the beginning, that if you make a blunder, say or do something, look or feel something, that is on the lower level of the old life, you are made aware of it, and you are not happy until you put that right. As you go on further with the Lord, you become not less, but infinitely more sensitive. You suffer very much more over lapses the further on you go. You know with increasing intelligence what it means to grieve the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Spirit is gravitating back to the place from where He has come, gravitating back in us, and the whole gravitation of a Spirit-governed life is upward. It is a test as well as a statement of fact. Are you gravitating thus? Is there a pull upward? Can you be happy and comfortable living a low-level Christian life? There is something wrong if you can. That is very simple. The very beginnings of this life of ascendancy are found in the gift of divine life, and the whole course is the outworking of that life. When we come (if we do by the grace of God come eventually) to that place of Rev. 14, it will not be because of any particular merit, but simply that the life has triumphed in us. So you see the consummation of that great thought and purpose of God is glory. The beginning is life, the end is glory.

But what is glory? It is the triumph of life. The body of our humiliation shall be made like unto the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). How shall this be? Well, it is all by the Lord the Spirit. It is all by the inworking of His life, resurrection life; glory at the end where life is triumphant. That is said for this reason, that this is the normal Christian life; and the abnormal Christian life is that which acts by fits and starts, up and down, and can be content not to go right on. There is something wrong about that; something has interfered with the normal growth.

Here you see that Zion is really something that is planted in us by birth. You remember that other fragment from the Psalms in this connection — “In whose heart are the highways to Zion” (Ps. 84:5). It does not say, Whose feet are on the highways of Zion. It is something subjective: Zion is inside, and it represents a tremendous transformation or change.

Israel’s Failure — Egypt, Not Zion, in Their Hearts

Now we have to come back again and use our great illustration of Israel. Israel came out of Egypt and were ostensibly going toward that holy hill, but really they were not. You look for the reason why they took such a long time about it and made such poor progress, and eventually did not arrive at all. You ask for the explanation, and it is this, that, while they were out of Egypt, Egypt was not out of them. Something objective had been done, but nothing subjective. All the time in their hearts they harked back to Egypt. The world was still in their hearts, and that was the cause of all the trouble. When you have the highways of Zion in your hearts, you have not got the highways of Egypt in your hearts. Something has been done inside to supplant something else. It is the only way of eradicating anything

from the heart. You have to supplant it, to put some greater power within; what Dr. Chalmers called in his famous sermon, “the expulsive power of a new affection”. The only way to expel the world is to have a new affection. “I will make mention of... Zion... this one was born there... All my fountains are in thee”.

This ascendancy takes its rise from the supplanting in our hearts of the world by Christ and all that Christ means. It was that again — and we find ourselves at every turn coming back to the great example of the apostle Paul — it was that which made him cry, even when so far on in the way, “I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). That word “excellency” is interesting. It means “the ‘ascendancy’ of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” — that this is above everything else: all things counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. That kind of thing in the heart is the only way to get rid of all the rest.

Egypt Flatters Self — Zion Slays It

But the rest is so subtle, it does find so great a response in us. It is here, of course, that the enemy cunningly works to arrest spiritual progress. The world? “Oh yes”, you may say, “I have given my life to the Lord: I am born again, I have finished with the world, I am out and out for the Lord now. All my life, service and energy is for the Lord”. “Very well”, says Satan, “let us placard your name everywhere as a great witness for the Lord, and then you will begin to be made a lot of by organized Christianity!” It is all wrapped up under the guise of affording you a great opportunity, and you are altogether unaware of how nice it is, and how you like it. What has happened? That is not the way of the Lamb. What is the way of the Lamb? He “emptied himself” (Phil. 2:7) — “made himself of no reputation”, A.V. “He emptied himself”: the devil is out to FILL you. Since he could not fill you with the world, he is going to fill you now with the gratification of the natural life in the service of God. It will not live very long. It will spend itself, and it will, moreover, mean spiritual immaturity. It is not the way of the Lamb.

If we were to press this, we could expose that whole thing very thoroughly by a good deal of evidence. If the enemy cannot get us in one way, he will get us in another, and he has got many a young life by flattery, ruined many a powerful servant of God by popularity. Yes, he has brought him down from his excellency by deeply-laid devices in the way of fame, pushing on, bringing to the fore; getting into the limelight, giving a name. Spiritual life has gradually receded and the end has been tragedy. That is not fiction, that is a tragic fact. The way to Zion, the way to the throne, the way to spiritual ascendancy is the way of the cross, and the cross ever more deeply planted right down to the very roots of self-interest, self-gratification, self-pleasure, even in the things of God. In the end we shall be brought to the place where it is not the Lord’s things that delight us, but the Lord Himself alone Who is our life. So the whole scheme of the enemy is to make the work of the Lord so attractive, to offer the prizes, the spheres, the opportunities, and all that sort of thing. It is very nice, it is very pleasant, it answers to something in our fallen nature. That something has to pass through the crucible of the cross. It may be something legitimate, something God-implanted, something essential to the outworking of this divine purpose, but it has been dragged into a realm of defilement.

Ambition Right If Selfless

You can call it what you like; aspiration, ambition, wanting to get on, wanting to rise. It is

there in the constitution of man, and rightly so; God put it there. “Thou makest him to have dominion” (Ps. 8:6). That is not just official, positional. That is the fulfilment of some divine power at work in the very constitution of man that makes him feel he must rise, but it has been perverted. It is perverted by the great pervert, who himself was perverted by his own pride when he said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14); and who came down to Eve and said, “Hath God said...? Why, God knows that in the day that you eat, you will have the root of the matter in you, you will not be dependent on God for your knowledge, you will not have to obey God, you will have it in yourself!” Adam and Eve fell to it, and the race fell with them, and from that day to this that holy thing of aspiration — shall we call it ambition? — that great power in us that makes us know we are born for a destiny, is perverted and tainted by self, by pride. So that a man has advanced far on the road to holiness who can never be caught along the line of flattery and popularity, to whom the siren charms and voices are as nothing, because he walks so humbly with his God, meek and lowly in heart. All the prizes and baubles have no attraction for him. I say that is in the HOLY hill of Zion. We are touching another thing now, how holiness is inherent in ascendancy. But that must wait.

It is not wrong to have ambition, to have aspiration, but it is wrong to have it actuated by personal interest and motive. That has to go through the crucible of the cross and be burnt out. Here is the paradox, the problem, the difficulty of a true Christian life: to be broken, emptied, humbled, reduced to nothing, and yet at the same time to have a fiery ambition. How reconcile these two things? I find it in Paul. With the exception of the Lord Jesus Himself, no man was more mastered by the spirit of ascendancy and dominion — shall we call it ambition, aspiration? — than he was, and no man was more selfless in it all. How he suffered at the hands of those who owed everything to him instrumentally! There is no personal thing here. He is the man who can write, “Love... seeketh not its own, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly — giveth itself no airs”. All that is ascendancy; not just geographical location, but spiritual ascendancy. Oh, let us ask the Lord to put in us a passionate ambition for His glory, and that we may be kept purified by the cross so that our glory does not force its way in. That will need a lot of the grace of God.

Holy Ambition — To Attain to Zion

All this is the meaning of Zion, of spiritual ascendancy, and we have really to face its implications. As I have said before, it is a matter which has a very present application. I know I run the risk of being charged with spiritualizing everything in the Bible. However, what I am after is that which is eternal. Everything else will go. It may be a casket in which eternal jewels are deposited, but the casket will go. I am after the jewel. At the back of all the symbols and of all actualities there is something spiritual, and for me it is far more profitable to get to what is God’s inner thought in things that He says, than it is to be only occupied with the thing said. You may take the book of the Revelation and deal with it historically if you like: you can take it on the futurist basis if you like; you can interpret it literally if you like; but it does not get you very far spiritually to do that. What we need is that spiritual life should be increased, and what I see as the grand issue of the book of the Revelation is a company standing with the Lamb upon mount Zion, whatever that may be. For me, interpreted in the light of all the Scriptures, it is not merely a time nor a location. It is the arrival at the end of God’s thought in our redemption, coming to the fullness of the meaning of having been redeemed from this present evil world and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, and reaching the place of highest usefulness to Him

when time shall be no more. I suggest to you that it is those things that have very much more immediate spiritual value for us than such questions as whether or not the Jews are going back to Palestine.

Ch 04 The Nature and Motive of Spiritual Ascendency

Reading: Ps. 24:3; Rev. 14:1-5; Ps. 122:2-4.

We have been led to look afresh at this whole matter of spiritual ascendency. We have looked at the vast expanses, seeing the thing very much as a whole. Now we get closer to some of the aspects of it.

The Challenge of Ascendency

But first of all there is this question of ascent. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” If I say something that may sound rather blunt, you will understand what I am trying to get at. At the outset I would say, Well, who is concerned with ascending? Who is interested in ascendency? What is the point in raising the question at all? Such a way of approach immediately raises this question: Have we yet become really concerned with this matter of spiritual ascendency? You see, here in the Old Testament, in the illustration of the thing in the life of Israel, there is a good deal taken for granted. It is assumed that there is both interest and desire to ascend. You find the thing in existence. No one is asked about it at all; no one is appealed to. The people of God are not told that they ought to go up. It is not a command in that sense, that some obligation is put upon them. If you get the atmosphere of this Zion factor as in the Psalms, you will find that there is nothing like that at all. To go up is one great longing, a life-ambition. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord. Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem”. Everything that is said about it is just an expression of a great life-desire. One thing which overshadowed everything else in the aspirations of a true Israelite was — If only I could go up to Zion! There was the trek three times a year, as the Lord had prescribed through Moses. “Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God” (Ex. 23:17). You may take it that was not some onerous business they had to perform. For weeks before, they were all astir about this trek to Zion. It was the one thing in their thoughts, it governed the whole of those three sections of the year. The culmination of those months was Zion, and that visit to Zion gave zest and new aspiration to get over another period. It was the one thing for which they lived. I think that is the spirit of the psalms, and certainly it was the spirit of David. It is just assumed there was interest in this matter and great desire concerning it.

That ought to test us and challenge us. As we come to understand, to see more fully what it means to come to the place of spiritual ascendency, there ought to enter into our lives a new zest. Of course, literally and historically, we can understand it. For instance, it is a good thing to gather together in conferences periodically and have a valuable time of fellowship and ministry, and perhaps many of you scattered over the earth look forward to it. It is good to have a literal coming together from all over the place from time to time, to enjoy the Lord, and the fellowship of the Lord’s people. It is not that we are talking about, good and valuable as it is, and much as we should encourage it, for mutual help is strength. But there is something which is far greater, far more important than that. There is the spiritual meaning of such things, and we are seeking to enter into that spiritual meaning.

But we begin with this: Is there really in us by a work of the Spirit A MIGHTY URGE UPWARD IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE? Have we got it? Is it in us? Are the highways to Zion really in our hearts?

Ascendency a Right Ambition

Historically we see that this was a phase of Israel's life; and especially when they were in good spiritual condition was this something which characterized them with great joy. But what is represented is of much longer history, the spiritual history of this principle. May I pause for another parenthesis, by way of reiteration? Everything in the Word of God, everything that God has appointed as ordinance and function and event in the life of His people, is only His way of saying something deeper. It is the embodiment of something eternal, something which belongs to a realm that is not passing, not of this earth at all. In this going up to Zion we have embodied in type this thing which has a so much longer spiritual history; that is, the inborn constituent of human nature to rise. As we have said before, it is not wrong to have ambition or aspiration. I think a lot of people think that is a form of soulishness which ought to be killed. Be careful how you set about killing your souls! They have to be redeemed, not killed; and in the matter of aspiration, of ambition, it is not a question of quenching but of redeeming and sanctifying. Aspiration is something which God put into the very constitution of man. "Thou makest him to have dominion" (Ps. 8:6). It is there. There is nothing wrong with the thing itself, and bound up with it there is this long history of ascendency. But, of course, as we have said, it was distorted, twisted, polluted, corrupted by the self-motive, the self-interest, the self-principle. Therefore in man by nature, aspiration and ambition is usually to be something himself, to come into a place of ascendency himself, in order to feel power in his own hands. While there may be timid souls who think that their trouble is all the other way round, let me say at once that even an inferiority complex is only your way of saying how you hate being down there; you want to be something! It is there, whatever form of expression it takes; and these psychological disturbances, which create this depression and self-occupation and false humility and circling round our wretched nothingness all the time, are only the cry-out of something in our constitution. They express a revolt in us; nature will out somehow, and nature is this, "Thou makest him to have dominion". Now the Lord is not going to quench that. He is going to redeem and sanctify it, and through the Cross purge it of all the personal interest and motive, and every element of self, until He has that Christlikeness of true meekness and humility which can govern, which can reign and take the throne. It is the LAMB Who is in the throne. The very symbol of weakness and dependence has come to govern.

So we are thrown back to this: Are we without the right kind of chastened, sanctified aspiration? There is an awful malady which overcomes some people, and it is fatal. It is what someone has called the malady of not wanting. We might change the word and say the malady of not caring. Something has gone very far wrong with us as Christians if there is anything like that about us. While, on the one hand, it should be farthest from our thoughts that we in ourselves should be anything, on the other hand there is this mighty ambition which God would have in us, that we should be unto the praise of His glory, that in all things He should be glorified in us. Are you suffering from the malady of not wanting or not caring? Something has gone wrong, there is a deep injury to your spiritual life, if it is like that. Ask the Lord to heal you of that fatal malady. It may be, of course, just the result of frustrated personal desire. The personal element has been disappointed and you find

you have nothing to take its place. That is terrible.

Testing of Motive — The Lord or Self?

Well, it is here, you see, in this realm of spiritual aspiration, this outworking of the great power of ascendancy as God would have it in us by the Holy Spirit, that all our testings take place — the testing of all our motives. Why should we aspire, why should we go on with the Lord, why should we pay the price, why should we endure hardship? If the answer is that we do not stand to get much out of it, then there is not much reason why we should aspire if we live on that level. Motives are tested along this line. Can you bear a seeming rebuff (it will never be a real one) from the Lord? Can you go on when He gives you no stimulants, when He seems to be standing back? What is your motive for going on? If it is a personal one, then you will have very little to feed it. The Lord will starve all our personal interests in this matter as we advance. He does not want us to go on simply because He is all the time giving that which would stimulate our going on. He wants us to go on for His own sake, because we have come to see the transcendent value of the things of the Lord. That is where we are tested. It is the life of Abraham in a nutshell. It is the life of many another servant of God who has stood closely related to His great purpose in Christ; testing, withholding, hiding, giving very little to encourage. Why should we go on? Motives are tested.

Ascendancy Demands Spiritual Stamina

Faith is tested, and endurance is tested, in this realm of spiritual ascendancy. We have to see something bound up with this which puts stamina into us. We have to see, as did the apostle, “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14) for stamina to be put into us as it was into him. Oh, what stamina, what endurance, that man exhibited! How did he do it? He saw the on-high calling, he had the heavenly vision, and all the vast accumulation of discouraging and disconcerting things here could not move him. He was able to say, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself”; “that I may gain Christ” (Acts 20:24, A.V. and Phil. 3:8).

It is here, of course, that all the exhortations and appeals and warnings come in Scripture. What are all the exhortations about? They all revolve around this one thing: Go on! “Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb. 10:35). All the appeals are on this ground and all the warnings are connected with this. You remember those warnings which are taken out of the very life of Israel, such as: “Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7-8). That is said not to unsaved, but to believers. “Harden not your hearts”. It is so easy for a believer, should he take the situations and the circumstances of spiritual development as an end in themselves, to get hard of heart, bitter of spirit, resentful and rebellious. “Harden not your hearts”, as they hardened theirs and lost the inheritance. It is in this realm that crises constantly arise in our life.

Ascendancy Acquired in Common Affairs

Again and again we find ourselves brought to a crisis: Are we going on or are we not? How many of you have been at that point, many times perhaps, in your spiritual life? It is almost as though you had been brought right to a standstill by reason of the fury of the oppressor, the hardness of the way, the difficulties of the situation, the discouragement of the

circumstances. Then you have started to go round in a circle, and sooner or later you have had to come to the place where you say to yourself, "Well, what is going to happen? Either I am going on or I am not!" A place of crisis, and the crisis is always on the question of utterness. If I am going on, I see that I have to go on without many things I want. I have just to go on, and that is all there is to it. That is utterness — going on because you can do no other than go on with God, you have no alternative. And every fresh crisis is a weakening of crises. You eventually come to the place where you say, "I have been down this street too many times before not to know where it leads. I am not going down it again. It leads to deadlock, there is no way out here at all". The Lord is working at us till He gets us to the place where we will go on, no matter what the circumstances are. That is spiritual ascendancy in its practical outworking.

What then is this matter of ascending into the hill of the Lord? It is not some mountain on this earth that we are going to climb. It is this everyday thing: Am I going on with God right through to His full end? There are ten thousand things to discourage and set back. Am I going to allow them to do that? Spiritual ascendancy meets us from the first moments of consciousness every morning and it is there with us all day long. Something is said, and we go down under it. Some situation arises, and we at once collapse. We all know it. There is not one of us who has not been caught by this situation. For the moment, we get down under it. We know quite well we shall never go on till we get on top. The Lord does not lift it off us; He says, "Come out from under it". "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). It is the challenge to us to leave the place that we have taken under things. That is spiritual ascendancy; that is the nature of it.

Service the Motive of Ascendancy

What is the motive of spiritual ascendancy? The motive, surely, as revealed in the Word of God in this very connection, is the motive of service. The Bible is a book of spiritual principles. What is the central thought of the throne in the Word of God? It is service. Take Joseph, for example. There is a man who through deep discipline, frustration, disappointment, abandonment, loneliness, and every kind of adversity, at last came to the throne. We may say that he climbed there. It was a moral and spiritual climb up. It was not just official, not just haphazard. God's eye had been upon him in secret, and when the Lord had tried him ("the word of the Lord tried him" Ps. 105:19), when that trial was accomplished, they sent and brought him out, and he was made prince in Egypt. But what was connected with that? The story is so patent. It was service. It was for the life of others. It was usefulness in the day of need.

That was the whole thought in the case of David. Starting from that low place as a shepherd lad looking after the few sheep, and the Lord looking into his heart, what a climb his was to the throne! How much discouragement, how much frustration, how much setback, how much heartbreak through those years of the reign of Saul! Hunted, driven, pursued; there was plenty there to make a man say, "Well, it is not worth it. I am going back to my few sheep, to a quiet personal life. At least I had that!" But he never did turn back. He went on. It was a moral climb to the throne. When David came to the throne, he came there because he had proved himself a man after God's heart. It was an inward spiritual history that had been developed. He came there, but when he was there, what did it all mean? It is not just a case of David in solitary isolation at the top of the tree, having achieved and realized all his personal ambitions. Oh, see the good, the benefit, the wealth, the fullness for the people

of God! It was not until David came to the throne that Israel really did enter into their destiny, their fullness. His reign and the earlier part of the reign of his son, Solomon, was the peak of Israel's history. Far more marvellous than you and I have yet recognized was that reign. There were powers, kingdoms, rulers, which had held their ground and menaced the people of God literally for centuries. They could never be overcome even by Joshua, and right on through the Judges they still held their ground within the compass of that land of Canaan. But when David came to the throne, every one of them was subjected. His kingdom was a vast kingdom of a great triumph such as had never been before. Yes, it is usefulness to the Lord's people that the throne represents, it is service all the time.

You come over to the New Testament and there you find the matter plainly expressed. "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... and he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:8-11). Is not this service in relation to ascending?

Come over to the Revelation. "These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:14-15). Upward to service, ascension and service — it is a principle. We could draw on the Scriptures to bear it out so much more fully. But there it is, a divine law.

Spiritual ascendancy carries with it serviceableness, usefulness, and we know quite well how it works in our present lives. A man or a woman who is spiritually down under is no use to the Lord. Only in the measure in which we have learned spiritual ascendancy — learned how to get on top of things, and how to bring the enemy under our feet — can we really be of service to the Lord. Our ministry is not a ministry of truths, words, teachings, ideas. It is the ministry of life, resurrection life, ascension life. That is to say, it is the life which overcomes, it is the power of ascendancy, and we have to minister that. That is the effect of life.

When we come together and the Lord's life is amongst us in any measure, what is the effect? We all feel lifted up. You will never minister life if you are down under all the time. We cannot really serve the Lord, except as we learn what it means to overcome — which is another word for spiritual ascendancy. It is the secret of service.

Ascendancy Persistently Assailed

Now is that not just the focal point of all the enemy's assaults and attacks? Why does he bring about situations to get the Lord's people under? Why all the quarrels among Christian workers, why the disagreements and disaffections? Why situations where it is impossible to go on any longer with so-and-so? Oh, yes, shame on us that it is so, but that is the sad story of Christian work. Why all these countless methods and ways of the enemy to get the Lord's people under? Simply to rob them of their usefulness to the Lord, to put an end to their service to Him, to open the way for death to counter the power of life. We know quite well that our usefulness to the Lord is a very practical matter, and very often depends upon our going and humbling ourselves before someone else, getting off our pedestal and getting down very humbly and admitting we have been wrong. Even if we have not been wrong, it means sometimes taking the place of one who has been in the wrong in an effort to get a situation cleared up, washing anybody's feet if only the way of a release of divine life can be secured. It is very practical, this matter of "marching upward to

Zion". It is not mere poetry, no mere beautiful idea. It is right here every day, and our usefulness and our service to the Lord may be held up by some seemingly little practical matter of everyday life. Nothing is small if it limits our usefulness to the Lord. What we might call the smallest thing carries with it no less an issue than the release of the mighty life of God to some other lives. That makes everything very big. Oh, if only we had a sufficient motive for seeing to things! Our motive is not big enough. We have taken a situation as something in itself. We have looked upon it as something merely human, something quite natural, just a happening. It may be a thing very common to man, a thing to which we are all very prone by nature, but we have failed to recognize that behind that are vast issues, far-reaching interests. The enemy knows all about it. Do not let us think that the enemy will do very big things to get us out if he can achieve his end by insignificant things. Sometimes we think a thing is so insignificant that of course the devil is not in that: he is occupied with bigger things than that! But if it achieves the end, it will serve his purpose best not to display himself too much. If he can upset you and put you out of spirit, and out of use to the Lord, by simply making someone say something inadvertently, so long as the end is accomplished it is as good as though he had rallied all his diabolical forces and concentrated them upon you. Why should he do that if he can succeed by a mere phrase? It is the end he is after.

The incentive to ascendancy is service, usefulness to the Lord. After all, ascendancy is the outworking of ascension union with our Lord, and everything comes from that. The ascended Lord in heaven: everything flows from that. But how can He fulfil all the purposes and possibilities of His glorious ascension, if He has not got a people in ascension union with Him through whom to do it?

Let us ask the Lord to write this thing in our hearts — that it is spiritual ascendancy that is so important, in order that the Lord may be able to express Himself in fullness; because, if you look again, you will find that Zion is the symbol of spiritual fullness.

Ch 05 Ascension Union With Christ

Reading: Ps. 24:3; Rev. 14:1-5; Ps. 122:2-4.

“Who shall ascend...?” “Whither the tribes go up... for an ordinance (a testimony, R.V.M.) for Israel”.

We continue for a little while in considering this matter of spiritual ascendancy. It might help you if you could draw a mental diagram as of a wheel, and wheels within a wheel. The hub is that which represents Zion. The centre of the hub is the Lord Jesus exalted and glorified. The circle immediately next is that which represents the hundred and forty-four thousand, a representative company in closest proximity spiritually to Him. The next wheel within the wheel is the church as a whole, and the rim is the outermost bounds of the universe. From the hub there radiate numerous spokes. They pass from the centre, first into and then through that inner company, then on to the larger company of the Lord's people in general, who are intended to come into the good of what is there at the centre, and then on beyond the church to the nations who will walk in the light thereof. These many spokes represent the features of Christ in exalted glory, the practical outworkings and implications and significance of Him in that place and state. Now that mental picture may help a little. We now deal with some of the spokes, but we have to come back for a

little while to the heart of the matter.

Comprehensively, it is just the question of Christ and His people in a position of absolute spiritual ascendancy. Unto that, very much is required in their discipline and experience. But out from that disciplined ascendancy of spirit tremendous values issue in widening circles. The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that that is the order of things. The book of the Revelation alone gives you that diagram. You start with the Lord Jesus in His glory and majesty and authority, His exaltation and His right to govern. You move to that company actually referred to, a representative company, one hundred and forty-four thousand; just a typical or symbolic number. The meaning is a company who have been brought, in the first place, to ascendancy on mount Zion for governmental purposes, as the very number — twelve times twelve — indicates, signifying not only government, but government in great fullness. Then you find that you bring in the whole church, the Jerusalem in addition to the Zion, and, beyond, the nations that walk in the light thereof. There is your diagram in the one book alone, but the whole Bible works on those lines.

Now we come back to this matter of spiritual ascendancy. We closed our earlier meditation by saying that spiritual ascendancy takes its rise from ascension union with Christ. That, figuratively, is all gathered into the fragment in the psalm: “Whither the tribes go up... for a testimony for Israel”. You know that is derived from Exodus and Deuteronomy. Twice in the book of Exodus this matter of periodic going up to the place where the Lord had put His Name is referred to. Then again in the book of Deuteronomy it is reiterated: “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose” (Deut. 16:16). That is the basis of this going up and appearing before the Lord. We shall come back to that presently. We are getting the setting.

A New Order Introduced With the Ascension of Christ

What is the principle? The principle is just going up. It is ascension. These psalms are called “The Psalms or Songs of Ascent”. “Whither the tribes go up”, and they go up “for a testimony for Israel”. Let us get right to this thing in actual spiritual expression. I think the Lord’s people are still slow to recognize the immense significance of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. If it does not remain just a date in our religious calendar, in general it is not much more than something upon which we look back in remembrance with a certain amount of wonder, that the Lord Jesus did ascend up into heaven and that He is there. More or less we appreciate the fact, just the fact of the event. I say more or less, because some have seen more in it than others. But few of us have yet been really forcefully impressed with the significance of the ascension of the Lord Jesus — with the fact that upon His ascension the whole character of the ages changed, and that from that time an entirely new order of things was introduced, everything of God from that time for this dispensation being from heaven and of a heavenly order. That is only one thing about the ascension, but it is an immense thing. It is a grievous fact that the church as a whole has missed the point of the ascension. For had it grasped the meaning it could never seek, as it has done, to construct anything of a more or less permanent character as attached to this earth, in system and form.

There were, of course, the great historic crises in the history of the church in which that very thing was developed. It came in with such fullness through Constantine, when he linked the church with the State and made it a thing of this world. That is what the devil

has always tried to do — to make the church something upon this earth, to be taken account of here, to have its standing here; its names, its titles, its recognitions, yes, its everything, as something here to impress this world with itself in a temporal way. And the appalling spectacle of the church today, speaking generally, is that it is without authority in this world; it has no voice. What voice has spoken in these terribly critical times through which we have been passing, when everything in itself proclaims that God has a controversy with the nations, and not least with this nation because of its greater responsibility? There is no doubt about it, the reign of vanity is accentuated a thousandfold in our day, and yet not a voice is raised for God. The church is silent. The church has not the voice, it has not the message, it has not the spiritual position required. Why? Because it has become so interwoven with the life of this world and so much a thing of this earth, that its heavenly authority has gone. It is another case of the glory having departed. It is not our desire to dwell upon such things now. That is only by way of coming to this matter of spiritual ascendancy and enforcing the statement that the church has lost the meaning of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. For if that ascension has one meaning for the dispensation, it is this, that the church's authority rests entirely upon its heavenly union with the Lord Jesus, its spiritual "other-worldly" position.

The Ascension of Christ — His Enthronement

Another thing about the ascension which is even greater is this, that in the New Testament the ascension was always looked back upon by the apostles and the church as the enthronement of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It is never just something in itself, a going up, a changing of location, something called "the ascension". It is His enthronement. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted... he hath poured forth this" (Acts 2:33). That is the ascension, and it is terrific when it begins to register upon this world the import of the fact that Jesus is Lord, and so it proved to be at that time.

The Church in Ascension Union With Christ

In the New Testament quite as much is said about the church's heavenly position as about Christ's. The two things run together. The one is the counterpart of the other. He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3); and "God... made us to sit with him in the heavenlies" (Eph. 2:6). Those two things are there and they are kept together. It is a spiritual position, with all the values of it put to the good and the use of a church that will really take that position. That is the full meaning of spiritual ascendancy. It is really coming to the place where in Christ the church has been established.

Then, of course, the fight begins, and the fight, as we have said before, all relates to that: not to keep the church from getting there, but to keep the church from knowing that its place is there, and, if possible, to bring the church down from there; because, you see, the church began its history there. It was not a climb from the beginning to get there: the church WAS there. In the thought of God that is its place continually. But the history is that the enemy has concentrated upon bringing the church spiritually out of its place. There is a little fragment that the psalmist uses which, while it does not exactly literally fit in here, is a very good statement, speaking, as it does, about the righteous man, and the conspirators who are talking together of how they can bring him down from his high spiritual place. "They only consult to thrust him down from his dignity" (Psalm 62:4). The

conspirators of hell are always at work to see how they can bring the Lord's people down from this excellency of the high place in Christ exalted. So it is ascension union with the Lord Jesus which is the real meaning of spiritual ascendancy, authority and power.

Some in Israel a Testimony for Israel

Now we can come to the next phrase: "Whither the tribes go up... for a testimony for Israel". In the type there was periodical ascension; they went up from time to time. They could not have known the meaning of it, but they did go up every so often, fulfilling a spiritual principle that the Lord's thought for His people is that their fullness of life is found on high; and it was so for them in their way. We have said already that it was the high peak of Israel's national life when they went from time to time to Jerusalem, to Zion. They were carrying out this spiritual principle, that ascendancy is a divine law of fullness of life.

"Whither the tribes go up". And why did they go up? For what did they go up? "For a testimony for Israel". What does that mean? Remember, it is not all Israel that has gone up literally. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God". A company representative of Israel went up, and in that representative company there was the testimony for Israel. What was that testimony? It expressed that which the whole house of Israel came into by means of that representative company, the blessings and benefits that all the Lord's people derived from the fact that there were those who went up on their behalf.

Let me pause there. Although the point is not applicable to Israel because, I expect, all of them would have gone up if they could have done so. Yet when you come to the spiritual outworking of this you find, tragically enough, that all the Lord's people are not willing to go up. It works out in this way after all, that only a certain proportion of them will really take this heavenly position and live this heavenly life. There are so many who want to live a Christian life down here on a merely earthly level, bringing everything in a wrong sense down to earth and relating it to things here. You understand I mean spiritually, not literally. I am not talking about abstract things in the way that we do when we speak of "living with your head in the clouds". We have said enough to show that this living in the heavenlies is a tremendously and grimly practical matter of everyday life. There is nothing more practical, more real. I venture to say that the realists of this earth are the people who are the most spiritual. They are up against the greatest realities, THE realities. They are a representative company through whom there will be derived by many others the benefits and blessings of their paying the price, taking the journey, putting up with all the difficulties, going right on to the Lord's fullest intention.

What is the testimony? Just use your imagination for a moment in the case of Israel and their representative company. When they went up, what happened? Well, they went up on three distinctive occasions. The first was at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which marked Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The second was at the Feast of Firstfruits, which marked the growth of the life of the Lord's people. The third was the Feast of Ingathering, the consummation of the life of the Lord's people. When they went up to these feasts, what was their testimony when they came back?

A Testimony to the Greatness of Redemption

Firstly, they would say, “We have had a glorious time up there in connection with our redemption. We come back just full of it, full of the greatness, the grandeur, the wonder, the ever-freshness of our redemption. We bring back to you something fresh in spirit as to what a great thing the Lord did when He saved us, when He delivered us from Egypt.” They would go over it; and while down there, in the customary places of their dwelling, it had become for everybody just some bit of their history, this going up for this particular thing once a year brought into continual, perennial freshness the greatness of their salvation. They saw the great king in “the city of the great king”, and they saw the great house of God; and they saw, in relation to the great king and the great house, how great a salvation theirs was. Until you have really seen the King, you have never grasped the greatness of your salvation. I mean that the more we see of the Lord Jesus, the more we wonder at the greatness of our salvation. “If he shall be manifested”, cries the apostle, “we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is” (1 John 3:2). Again another apostle says, “We... beholding... the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). Oh, IF we only saw the greatness of Christ, what a new apprehension and appreciation of our salvation we should have! And this, in the ordering of the Lord, was to be a perpetual memorial, something to be renewed all along the line; not a living back there so many hundreds of years ago — or so many decades of years ago when we were saved. It is more wonderful today than ever it was! That is the testimony for Israel. Our testimony ought to be, “We have seen the Lord anew, we have seen the King anew, we have seen the house of God anew: we have seen this magnificent thing, this masterpiece of God, the church, which is His Body.” What a thing it is to see the church with spiritual eyes, to see God’s conception of it! The more we see, the more we wonder at our high calling. It is no small thing to have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, to be conformed to His image, and to be a part of that magnificent spiritual edifice which is to dominate the world to come and to be the administrative centre of God through His Christ unto the ages of the ages. They went up and saw the king, and they saw the house, and they went back saying, “It is more wonderful than ever!” and so all Israel came into the good of their refreshed vision.

I know it is a costly way, but it is a tremendous thing for any of us to have left the lower levels of Christian life, those remote places, and come up to the mount, and to have been shown the Lord in greater fullness. None of us has seen Him yet in very great measure, but it is a great thing to see a little more of Him, and of the meaning of Christ personal and Christ corporate. Therein lies the power of a testimony to the Lord’s people — “We have seen!”

I have often asked myself the secret of Paul’s endurance and persistence and triumph. The only answer I can find is that he had seen the Lord. You can never undo that.

They went up and were for a testimony for Israel. Oh yes, the hundred and forty-four thousand are with THE LAMB. Ever and always it is the way of suffering and of sacrifice that leads to that place, but it is good to have for the Lord’s people that which they need to lift them from their low levels of spiritual life. In the end it is worth it — to know the greatness of their redemption through seeing the greatness of the King and of the house of God.

A Testimony to the Lord’s Persistent Working

And then the Feast of Firstfruits: “The feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours” (Exodus 23:16). The Lord has done something in us. It may not be all done yet, but He has done something. It has been scorching work, fiery work, but He has got us so far. And this is the point: His having done that much is the guarantee that He is going to finish the work. That is the significance of the firstfruits. “He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6). The Lord has exercised power in bringing us thus far. He is at work upon us and in us; there is a history of His faithfulness. Oh yes, however much we feel needs yet to be done, however far we have yet to go, nevertheless we have a testimony; the Lord has done something; and wherever that is the case, He means to finish it. If ever the Lord has taken a life in hand, He purposes to see that life right through, if that life will let Him. We shall never break down because the Lord is not persistent, because He, as though He were one of us, suddenly slacks off and turns to other interests. No, He is going to pursue this thing. Thank God for that! The fact that He has done something is the earnest that He wills and intends to finish it.

There is a testimony for Israel in what the Lord has done and is doing, both in and for His people. What I mean is this. It is a great thing to be able to say, “Not only was I converted so many years ago, and came to a knowledge of the Lord, but I have a history since then with the Lord, and it is a very real and living one. I know how imperfect I am, how far short I come, what a lot more there is to be done, but I do know the Lord; right up to date I know the Lord.” They went up to Zion; and whatever they had been feeling about it all through those months while they had been in their own homes, they went back and said, “The Lord started a work in us long ago and He is going on with it; there are evidences that He means to get us right through to glory; there are tokens that He is doing something.” The people were heartened and lifted up out of their discouragement and despondency as these went back with their testimony. The Lord needs a people like that today. In the midst of everything that has settled down to a cold system and form of teaching and practice, everything that has become merely a set thing, He needs just such a people. Oh, the Lord does need a company, “a hundred and forty-four thousand”, who represent the goings of God, who are really in the good of a present work of God, in whom something more of His life is manifested. They, in themselves, may be of no account whatever: you may look at them and say they are a poor lot. But there is something there; you meet the Lord in them; you sense life. Those people are alive, there is something there that is active in the life of God. The Lord needs a representative people like that today. Is it not true in this Christian world that is so short of life, so systematized and fixed and static, that there is a need of the flow, the release, the impact of life? I say again, there is a price attached to that, to serve in that capacity. But the Lord needs that company, and may He not be seeking out that company even in His approach to US?

The occasion of the Feast of Firstfruits is better known to us as Pentecost. Pentecost seems to have been an inclusive festival and occasion. It looked backwards and brought up the greatness of redemption. It spoke of the mighty emancipation of a people for God from the world through the blood of the Lamb. It looked forward and set forth the consummation in the full and glorious ingathering. It led immediately to firstfruits through ripening fire of persecution (e.g. Stephen, and others) and in itself it immediately signified ascension, ascendancy — the Lamb on mount Zion — “My king upon my holy hill” (Ps. 2:6).

A Testimony to the Glorious Consummation

That brings us to the third occasion on which the tribes went up to Jerusalem — the Feast of Ingathering, otherwise called the Feast of Tabernacles. It was then that the whole of the chief fruits of the ground — the corn, the wine and the oil — were gathered in. That feast was the consummation of all else — a testimony to the Lord's coming for His own in final fullness, a glorious crown to the whole process that commenced with the deliverance of a people from the bondage of Egypt. It was the consummate expression of the ascendancy of the Lamb and of a people with Him.

I believe that really is the heart of the value of the Lord's coming as something held by the church. That coming has been resolved into a bit of the church's doctrine, and, strangely enough, as a subject it has split the churches into fragments. Instead of being a means of elevating the church and bringing it into a place of power and authority, the teaching of the coming of the Lord has had the opposite effect. You will agree with me that to believe with all your might in the second coming of the Lord does not necessarily carry with it tremendous spiritual power in your life. You can swallow all that has been written on the subject by eminent servants of God, and it may make no difference to your spiritual life. But it ought to. And how should it work? Well, it is not that you have an objective conception and are lifting up your eyes in imagination to that day when the Lord comes. That does not always carry you through the difficult patches. But the Holy Spirit, Who always has that day in view as the counterpart of the ascension and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, Himself bears witness in us, and imparts to us the values of that exaltation whenever we do really, in spirit, contemplate His coming again. Is it not true that if you really in the Spirit sing a hymn about the coming of the Lord, you begin in spirit to rise already? You cannot spiritually dwell upon the coming of the Lord without a tremendous sense of ascendancy. It lifts you up. It is a spiritual thing, not some historical thing in the calendar of the church, and the Spirit bears witness. On a certain line, we have everything to put us off being occupied with the teaching of the Lord's coming. In my childhood I was told that the Lord would be here before my life had gone much farther on, and that certain people were never going to see death. But they are all dead! That has been going on for centuries. Long before I was born people were saying that kind of thing, and you might well say, "I have done with this, it does not hold water". Yet we are going to sing those hymns again, in spite of all these theories and all these things which seem to be so false and untrue, and which seem to justify the men who said, even in Peter's day, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning" (2 Pet. 3:4). In spite of it all, we are going to sing, and as we sing our spirits will rise. Why? Not because we are putting on blinkers, shutting our eyes, imagining things, wishfully thinking. No; but because the Spirit of God is in us and He bears witness to a great fact, when we in heart, in spirit, turn in that direction. The church is going up where the Lord has gone up. Ascension is going to be consummated by a great ingathering.

The testimony for Israel is not this or that theory about the second coming of Christ, but a living testimony in the life of the Lord's people; which is borne out in this way, that those concerned are really already in the good of it, they are living ascension lives; they know already something, if only a little, of what it means to be raised together with Him. "Whither the tribes go up for a testimony for Israel". Those Israelites went up, and then they went back with their testimony glowing in their faces, and the rest got the good of it. And there is a big "rest" today waiting for the good that can come to them through a company of the Lord's people who really do know what ascension life with Him is.

Ascension life is reached progressively, not at one bound. They did not leap from their distant cities and towns on to the peak of Zion. It was a journey and a climb, and it could only be done one step at a time. If they had tried to take more than one step at a time, they would very soon have been discouraged. It is just a going on with the Lord against discouragement, adversity, trial, suffering, against the enemy that lies in wait. Yes, all that, but it is a going on, and almost imperceptibly coming more and more to the place where you are not so easily discouraged and overcome as you once were, where the enemy has not quite the same ground as he once had for pulling you down and undoing you. It is a going up. It may seem slow, but none the less it is a going up. There will be a consummation, and we shall arrive at last in glory.

Ch 06 The Holiness of Zion's Hill

Reading: Ps. 24:3-5; Rev. 14:1-5.

We have been occupied with what we have called “spiritual ascendancy” — “Who shall ascend...?” What does it really mean? How does it concern us? The answer will come to us in some such form as this. First of all, the whole of the Word of God from beginning to end sets forth the necessity for spiritual, inner ascendancy on the part of God’s people. That carries with it the fact that there is something to get over; for ascendancy has no meaning if there is nothing above which to ascend, if there is no challenge, nothing to overcome. We have no need, I think, to be told that there is quite a lot that demands absolute ascendancy in our hearts, in our spirits, and we learn afresh almost every hour that there is a great realm, a universe, in which our lives are set, which will press us down and under, and hold us there, unless we know how to get on top of it. That is patent to us all.

Ascendancy Over the Enemy

Then we begin to define that, to break it up, and we find three things about it. Firstly, there is a great realm of spiritual forces outside ourselves which are set upon our casting down, seeking by any means to get us down and under. That is a reality. There is no doubt about that.

Ascendancy Over Our Own Souls

The second thing is that that great realm of spiritual antagonism to us has its opportunity in something in us. As we find ourselves now in our present state of humanity, there is that in us which constitutes a foothold, a ground and a response to that great system of evil outside. Temptation has no meaning unless there is something in us that can respond. We know that this is not only an objective fight, it is also subjective. This whole matter is an inward one as well as an outward, and until you have dealt with the inward, you have no chance of dealing with the outward.

Power with God

Then there is a third thing which arises in the Word of God. It is a question of ascendancy with God, or, to put that in another way, power with God, standing with God; where God’s power and support and resources are with us. That is a tremendous thing, for, apart from that, ascendancy in the other two realms is hopeless. We cannot meet the great foe without

and have any assurance of victory within unless we know absolutely that we stand well with God, that there is no shadow over God's face where we are concerned. On that basis we are princes with God, we can prevail with God in prayer. (I did not say to prevail UPON God in prayer. That is a different thing altogether. We have not to prevail upon God, but to prevail with God; that is, to come so completely into oneness with God that He has no need whatever to have reservations in our case — He can completely let go. To prevail upon God would be to change God. We are not out to do that, but we are out to bring the unchangeable God — if I may put it in this way — into a place where, in His relationship with us, He can release His power. That is just a little technical difference by the way.) Prevailing with God in prayer is no small matter, but a tremendous thing. This is power with God and, because of that, power with men, and power over the enemy, and power over our own souls — and what an enemy our souls are to spiritual progress! All that is what is meant by spiritual ascendancy: coming into a place where we are really in possession of the situation.

Lest you should be discouraged at that point, let me say again that this is not something done suddenly, in a moment. Coming to Zion, as we said earlier, is a journey, but it is an upward journey. This whole matter ought to be progressive.

Zion the Place of Spiritual Power

Zion, then, is the place of spiritual power. Zion, we have already indicated, means the stronghold. It was the peak of conquest in the Old Testament. It was the one thing which forever stood as a testimony to kingship, when kingship reached its highest point of realization in David. It became known as the city of David. That is no mere title: that is achievement, that is triumph, that is the last word in ascendancy. So Zion speaks of being over, up, through: it is there above all other places spiritually. Thus Zion becomes the symbol of the life of the Lord's people in the place of His Lordship or of His power, and it is the very embodiment of the meaning of the kingdom of God. And remember, that while by new birth we are brought into the kingdom of God — “Except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3) — the kingdom of God is also within you (Luke 17:21). Both things are true. You come into a position by birth, but that position comes into you. The Kingdom has to be in you. The Kingdom is not just the realm of God's reign. It is a form, a nature, a kind of reign which is above every other authority and power. “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Dan. 7:27). It is a spiritual thing in the first place. People talk about the kingdom of God in such earthly ways. They speak of “extending the Kingdom”. The idea is that you are building something up over a wide superficial area, whereas the Kingdom means something very much more than that. The kingdom of God is a deep thing, a mighty thing; “a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28). Zion, meaning ascension through victory, becomes the simile of spiritual power.

Holiness Basic to Spiritual Power

Upon what does spiritual power rest? Power with God, power from God in our lives and in this world, enabling us to overcome; upon what does it rest? Who shall ascend? “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood, and hath not sworn deceitfully” (Ps. 24:4). “I have set my king upon my HOLY hill of Zion” (Ps. 2:6). This matter of spiritual power is a matter of holiness at its root and foundation. Many

have thought that spiritual power is a matter of enduement. To receive a “baptism” of the Holy Spirit, that is said to be the way of power — something that happens to you like that. Let me point out that that concerns power for witness. “Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). But power over the power of the enemy is by reason of the nature of the Holy Spirit — the HOLY Spirit — and the witness, the power, of the church in its effectiveness at the beginning was simply because the HOLY Spirit had come to be absolutely in the ascendent as Lord. That is why, when in the book of the Acts you so soon find something unholy rising up in the midst, there was such an instant action of judgment by the Spirit. You will recall the cases of Ananias and Sapphira and others.

That opens up a very long and full history, and you at once see that the great enemy’s one means and method of destroying power over him was to corrupt, to introduce something unholy. That is the history of man. “Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Ps. 8:6). But that purpose was definitely countered for the whole race by the subtle movement of the enemy to introduce something unclean, unholy. It was done. The enemy did not come with an army and assail objectively. He simply insinuated something unholy, and that did it, and that whole kingdom crashed. From the beginning it has been like that, all the way through. Israel’s history is just such a history. The Lord’s purpose for Israel, as we have seen, was that they should be above all the nations of the earth, the head and not the tail. Then Balaam was hired to curse them. But you cannot curse people who are holy. He came in his heart to curse, but his very lips were taken hold of by God, and he said the most glorious things of Israel. “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob” (Numbers 23:21). “Who can curse a people like these whom God hath blessed? I am helpless in this matter.” He went away and came back a second time to seek to defeat these people, to bring them down from their excellency. I suggest you read again those three visits of Balaam and all the magnificent things he said about Israel. He describes them from God’s standpoint. After three tries he has to give it up. In effect, he has to say, “It is no good; people like that cannot be paralysed by a curse, they cannot be defeated.” But then he sells himself, and somehow his soul is bound in the irons of covetousness, and what he cannot do directly, Satan leads him to do indirectly. You have those words in Micah (6:5) about Balaam, and then in Revelation: “Thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). Balaam went round to the back door and introduced something unclean — idolatry — and down Israel came. How awful is the tragedy of the crash of that glorious people! Not from a position which they had reached by their own merits, not from an exalted condition which was their own native condition, but a position in which God had placed them through faith in Him; our blessed position in Christ it was, virtually. It was not true literally to say of Israel that there was no iniquity or sin or wrong in them. It was how God looked at them while they were there encompassing the tabernacle in a full obedience to the Lord. God looked at them, so to speak, in Christ positionally.

But then idolatry was introduced. It is the story which arises again and again, both generally and particularly, of how Satan gains the ascendancy, what the ground of Satan’s power is. The ground is always something unholy.

Is not that the story of Job from one angle? Job, on the ground of righteousness which is by deeds, acts, externalities — the law, if you like — is found blameless. On that ground, then,

Satan is released to assail, and under the assault you find things rising up in Job that he would never have suspected. No one would have believed those things were in Job, and Satan is finding a good deal of power, of ground, to shake him to his very foundations, until Job gets through to another position. This is not the position of what he is according to the righteousness which is of the law — works, deeds, externalities. It is a position of righteousness virtually by faith, where, so far as he himself is concerned, he no longer talks as he did at the beginning about the kind things he did, and of how everybody acknowledged what a good, generous man he was. “Now”, he says, “I have learned something;” “Mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5,6). When he got through there and capitulated to the Lord, Satan’s power was taken right away. Do you notice there is a certain stage in the course of that conflict where Satan disappears from the scene? Satan is very much in evidence at the beginning; but where is he at the end? What has happened to him? You cannot find him. A work has gone on within Job which has taken the ground from Satan and compelled him to retire, and in the end the man is in the place of absolute ascendancy — over friends, circumstances, himself and the devil. A new ground has been found; not the ground of his own righteousness, but the ground of Another’s righteousness. You find right through, as the matter develops, that Job is crying for someone else — for a daysman, a mediator, an advocate; and the only one who answers his need is the Lord Jesus. You see it again and again. His cry is for this mediator to stand between; and speaking typically, Job passes from his own ground to the ground of Christ. And that is ascendancy; the enemy is out of court.

You come to later days, to Israel and the prophets. Take the third chapter of Zechariah. “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary”. Satan is in the place of power to resist. Joshua represents Israel, and in that vision of the filthy garments we have Israel’s unclean condition before God, resulting in Israel’s utter impotence in the presence of the enemy; weakness, powerlessness, because of uncleanness. Not only are the filthy garments taken away, but a new white robe is put upon Joshua, and a fair mitre upon his head. The word is, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan... is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”. The rebuke to Satan is administered when the condition is changed. That is to say, in other words, Satan’s power is only, but always, established where there is unholiness. Ascendancy over Satan is not something objective: it is a matter of condition.

So you find that the whole thing turns, in Israel’s history, upon the priests. How is the priest? That is how the people are. Look at the situation in the days of Eli. The priests, what of them? Look at Eli’s sons. The priesthood is corrupt: there is gross uncleanness. How is Israel? Utterly in defeat, captured. It is a deplorable picture of a people brought down from their excellency to lowest levels of defeat, helplessness and misery. The priesthood was the key to the situation: as with Joshua, so with Eli.

What is priesthood? What is the meaning of it? Priesthood has to do with the removal of sin, of corruption. That is the secret of life. The priest stands for the life of God’s people. But there is no life where there is corruption, and there is no power with God where there is unholiness.

We could go right on to the New Testament, to the churches in Asia. It is the same trouble over again. “I have this against thee: thou hast there that and that and that”. What is the

effect? They are helpless, impotent, defeated. The one word which relates to them most is “Overcome”. So we get the force of the words, “To him that overcometh” — “You are under; you have to get over, but you cannot take this position officially and mechanically: things have to be dealt with.”

I think I have said enough to show what the real foundation of spiritual power is, power with God, power over the enemy. It ought to be helpful to us.

The Defilement of Self-interest

We do go through it in our spiritual experience! How persistent the enemy is to get us somehow involved in something questionable! There is an extraordinary phrase used in relation to Israel’s life — a phrase not easy to understand, and I do not profess to understand all it means; but there it is. It is this phrase: “the iniquity of the holy things” (Ex. 28:38). What does it mean? I can see something of what it means, and a great deal more than I am going to say now. I am only going to suggest to you that in the fuller meaning it means this — that there are holy things, and it is in the realm of the holy things that the enemy is always trying to get something that involves compromise.

Love, true love, is the most holy thing, and it is in the realm of love that the enemy is always trying to get something compromising, something wrong. We have said ambition is not a wrong thing. It is a divinely implanted thing. God made man to have dominion. Perhaps ambition is the wrong word; aspiration is a more spiritual word — the desire, the sensing of destiny, that you were made to rise, made to attain. You were not made a worm grovelling on the earth: you were made with legs; which means that you were made to get somewhere. Interpreted spiritually and morally, God made us to rise, to reach, to attain. That mighty instinct is found in the apostle — “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on...” (Phil. 3:12). Here it is at work, that kind of thing. Aspiration is a holy thing. Is it not just there that all the iniquity is found? — the self-element, the possessive, the acquisitive, the assertive, the domineering, the effort to gain dominion. Then dominion becomes domination, and it has gone wrong: the very spirit of it has gone. Meekness has become pride, the glory of God has become instead our glory. It is the iniquity of holy things: and remember, that the nearer you get to the most holy, the nearer you get to the deepest perils. The deep things of Satan lie next to the deep things of God. “The iniquity of the holy things.” The Lord gives something which is His gift, and it is holy; and then the enemy seeks to spoil it by bringing in something that is not holy. The Lord has ever had to do a work there of cutting in between. He gave Isaac to Abraham, a holy gift. It was God’s gift, something utterly of God, very pure. In principle God’s most utter gift. Then God had to say: Offer him! What is happening? Abraham is in peril now, in infinite peril of the iniquity of a holy thing. What is it? To hold that personally to himself and not let it go. A self-hold may come in to spoil the holy thing. It was when the self that was there was resisted without hesitation, when in faith Abraham responded to God and let the boy go, that the boy was given back a thousand-fold forever and ever on holy ground. There must be no self-ground. What a perilous moment that was for Abraham, lest his personal love should come in and interfere with his holding everything for God! And that is a thing with which you and I are continuously confronted and assailed. Holy things; but an impingement of personal interest, and the holy things are robbed of their power. We could mention thing after thing that is holy and yet that holy thing, which is meant to be of such account, such spiritual value, can be robbed of it all because something comes in that

is unholy.

The Defilement of an Earth Touch

Let me say again that the unholy thing need not be something that all the world would call evil. When we talk about unholiness, our thoughts fly to certain things which we call unclean and corrupt and evil, certain positive things. Oh, but it goes very much deeper than that. You see, it may only be what we have before called the earth touch. We live in a world and on an earth that is cursed. Everything in this creation lies under a curse, the proof of which is becoming more and more patent; for the higher man rises the quicker he destroys himself with his work. He cannot rule out the power of death and evil from his world however high he rises. The further he goes, the more that power of evil and death works. It is such a vain, false thing to talk about a “new world”, a “new order”, until you have changed man’s very nature. We live in a world, in a creation, like that, and the prince of this world has got things in his hands; there is no doubt about it. If you live in his world, he has you in his hands. Step across from the kingdom of God’s Son to the kingdom of the enemy and you know you touch death. In many, many ways we know we touch death when we do that. The further we go with the Lord, the more we find we dare not touch that other realm. What we could touch as Christians at one time we may not touch now. We are learning. We could talk at one time in a way in which we may not now. We have learned in a very grim way that others may, but we may not. As you go on in a certain realm, you are becoming more and more limited in another realm.

That is the difficulty of going right on with the Lord, being of “the hundred and forty-four thousand” company. There is a certain amount of isolation. You have gone with the Lord — “They... follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” — and no one else follows you; you are very much alone; it is spiritual loneliness. We are in this world and if we touch it in a voluntary way we become defiled. I am not saying we have to leave our business. As Paul says, if we are not going to have anything to do with this world in practical ways, we had better go right out of it (1 Cor. 5:10). That is not the point. The question is that of our voluntary moral and spiritual links, our choices. It is not our business obligations that need involve us, but our heart association — the sort of things we want, like, choose. Those things bring a death touch, and we come under arrest. We find we have lost our position, our spiritual power, our ascendancy, whatever that may mean — our joy, peace, rest. We have touched the dead realm somewhere in spirit. It is a terrible thing in spirit to touch death — and that is iniquity. You have touched iniquity.

Hence the Lord has to do this work of the Cross in us. It is no use saying, Bring us not over this Jordan! Jordan has to do its work continually, to cut right in.

Let me say here, for the sake of the Lord’s servants particularly, that this is the realm in which our main education takes place. You and I, as the Lord’s servants who have responsibility in the things of God, are up against this question of spiritual power all the time. We find the enemy so entrenched, we find him holding the ground. We meet so much that does not yield, and our whole question is one of power, power with God and power over the enemy. Now, it is not always a case of flagrant wickedness, a Corinthian situation of gross moral sin, of wrong in the domestic and social life of the saints, of doubtful business dealings, and so on, with which we have to deal. Where these are found, they are, of course, holding up everything, and must be dealt with. But as we go on we find that

spiritual progress, coming to a place of real increase, of spiritual ascendancy, is not just a matter of dealing with what everybody would call evils and iniquities, but it may only be an earth touch that is involved — in this sense, that a thing is too earthly, the horizon is an earthly horizon. We have come down to earth, and it is a matter now of the success of our work in the eyes of men, of all sorts of things which are earthly considerations. We are involved in something which, after all, while it means to be for the Lord and is very zealous for Him, nevertheless is itself so earthly. There is a worldly principle in this. It is only as we come to that completely heavenly position, where every earthly and natural consideration is set aside, and nothing matters to us here so long as the Lord is being glorified, that ours is a true position. What does it matter whether everybody leaves us and goes somewhere else, so long as they have gone after the Lord? It does not matter to me whether all of you get up and go, and never come back here, so long as you have found more of Christ somewhere else. If you do, I will be after you, to enjoy it with you! If you have found something more of Christ, that is all that matters. Is that true of organized Christianity today? What about the charge of sheep stealing? On what does that rest? OUR fold, not the Lord's fold: OUR people, OUR workers, taken away. It is OURS! If all who had responsibility would but take the attitude, "If only they can find more of the Lord somewhere else, let them go as soon as they can: we are prepared for our whole organization to come to an end, if only that is true. If we cannot be the channels of meeting their need, well, the Lord save us from trying to carry on something that is not delivering the goods." An utterly detached position, with no personal interest or consideration at all, is the only place of spiritual power. That is ascendancy, that is heavenliness. It is very real, and again I say to you, that is the realm of our education as the Lord's servants. If we are going on into fullness, we shall be learning all along the line what has to go, what we cannot touch, what the Lord cannot allow. He will allow and bless up to that point, but beyond that point something more has to be done, the question at issue being, not something of positive sinfulness, in the sense in which men speak of sinfulness, but just some earth touch, something we have never before realized to be of the old creation. So the matter of spiritual ascendancy becomes very practical.

Encouragement to Perseverance

I cannot close without going back, lest anyone should come under oppression over this. There are two sides to this matter. We have seen Israel spread abroad in the valley and Balaam looking down from the height, and what the Lord made Balaam to say, as expressive of His own attitude toward them because they were centred in His Son: and that is true. Our position in Christ through redeeming grace is so complete and perfect that there never, never can be added anything to it; it is perfect. Even to Corinthians, who are always looked at by us as the poorest specimens of Christians in the New Testament, with all that was there that was so unhappy, so unholy, the apostle will begin by saying, "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints". Not "called to be saints": the words "to be" are not in the original text and should be left out, as they entirely upset the whole idea. "Called saints". When you are called saints, you are regarded as saints. "Sanctified in Christ Jesus". So far as our position in Christ is concerned, we shall never be any more sanctified than we were at the beginning, than we are today. But no one is going to settle down on that and say that nothing matters. We have now to walk according to our calling. The battle is on, the enemy is out to put us out of our position in Christ, to make it unreal. That is just where the mighty power of the Holy Spirit comes in to educate and discipline us. We pass into experiences which, but for the mighty reactions of the Holy Spirit in us, the mercy and

grace of God, would undo us as the Lord's servants, rob us of all our power, because they are compromising positions. But, while our hearts are really toward the Lord, the Spirit goes on and does the work, and brings us inwardly to the place where already in Christ we are deemed to be. We are in Zion, we are there positionally, and yet we are on the way to Zion. Do not be discouraged if the way seems difficult. It is a rising way, and that means you have to overcome something with every step. You have only to take one step at a time; do not try to take two or three. If you look right up there to the summit from the beginning, you may be discouraged. If your feet are on the way to Zion, take the next step. And don't forget, young people, that in this way the first wind is usually our zeal, and power to go only comes when the first wind comes to an end. God's power really comes when our first wind gives out. I mean this, that when we come to the place where we have to say, "I cannot go on any further; unless something happens, I shall never go on" — that is all right. What some of us have proved in the further stages of this way to Zion is that the power of God to keep us going is altogether independent of our enthusiasm. The marvel is that we have gone on at all. We have not done it because we were so enthusiastic. All that has long since waned and dried up. Now it is something very much more than enthusiasm that keeps us going; it is nothing less than the power of His resurrection. That is the power working in us of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph.3:20).

Ch 07 The Name of the Lord in Zion

"Thou in thy lovingkindness hast led the people that thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation... Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex. 15:13,17).

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" (Ps. 24:3).

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1).

"For the Lord hath built up Zion; he hath appeared in his glory... that men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion" (Ps. 102:16,21).

A Present Foretaste of Glory

The above passage in the book of Exodus is very remarkable in this respect, that the reaching of Zion, the holy habitation, the hill of the Lord — for so it proved to be eventually — is spoken of as though it were already an accomplished fact at the beginning of the history of Israel as a nation; for Exodus 15 occurs when Israel is only just out of Egypt and just over the Red Sea. The inspired song sees the end at once and brings it right forward, and the people are, in spirit, in the good of the end right at the outset. It is the language of accomplished fact. "Thou hast led... thou hast guided... to thy holy habitation..." There you have New Testament history crammed into a very small compass of words; because right at the beginning of the church's history, when the book of the Acts opens, you are only just

past Calvary, you are just out of the authority of darkness, but the whole spirit and atmosphere is of present attainment of the end. The Lord's people there are undoubtedly, in spirit and enjoyment — at the end of the journey. They have arrived. They have come to Zion. They have ascended into the hill of the Lord, and it is with glory men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion. Thus it was right at the beginning. Whenever the Lord brings in part of His purpose of the ages, He always brings it in with glory. The bringing in is always accompanied by a sense of fullness, attainment and realization. It has always been like that, and those who were there at the time felt, "We have reached the end, we are there!" That was the spirit of it.

You know that is how you feel when you get truly and soundly born again. At the time you feel there is nothing more to be done; you are ready for glory, heaven has arrived! No one can tell you anything, teach you anything! It is that spirit of youth which says: I have more understanding than all my teachers! It is all glory. God has broken in so far as you are concerned. It is the coming of the great purpose of the ages, and you have arrived. So it is whenever the Lord comes in like that. He gives at the beginning an experience, a vision, a consciousness, a realization, of the greatness and the glory of His purpose; we are just full of it. That is how they were in those first days of the church's history.

A Process Begun

But then the tense changes — "Thou wilt bring them in..." — and it is not long before you discover that it is not only that you have a present foretaste, but also you are in a process begun — you have arrived, but you have to go yet some way before you do arrive. There is a glorious paradox about it all. The Holy Spirit has touched the end at the beginning, and then He has taken up that end to make it more than just a sensation, just an ecstasy — to make it an inward reality. Although on that day, when they were just over the Red Sea, Israel did sing so lustily about having arrived, they had to learn that in spiritual geography there was a long way to go for that to become something more than just a sense of things, however great that sense might be.

What is the Lord doing when He combines these tenses, bringing these two things together — the realization that we are come to Mount Zion and yet that we have a long way to go, and something has yet to be done? The Lord knows us very well. He knows realities. He does not build upon nebulous, abstract foundations. He is going to have real people — very real people. As we said earlier, the Lord's spiritual people are the greatest realists on earth. They know increasingly how real everything is that is spiritual. Such things become almost desperately real. This is not merely something in the mind, this is something tremendously real. Those forces of evil are very, very real. The ground which they have in the broken-down humanity which is ours is very, very real ground. Everything that has to do with the spiritual life is very real indeed, and the Lord is the great Realist where we are concerned. He is going to have nothing that is merely an emotion. He gives the foretaste, the earnest, and then He says, "Now I am going to set to work to make that your real position". When at length the hundred and forty-four thousand are found with the Lamb on Mount Zion, you notice by the context that they are not a people who have come there merely on an emotion or an ecstasy or a teaching. They have come through things. They are not only in the truth, the truth is in them.

That brings us at once to this further spoke in the wheel of which we were speaking earlier,

the very hub of which is Zion. It brings us to this, the Name of the Lord in Zion. Looking at the actual spiritual counterpart of all this Old Testament teaching about Zion — Pentecost, the Lord Jesus — what is the thing that is so very much in evidence from that moment; the thing that is more on the lips of the apostles than anything else, and which constitutes the dynamic of their ministry, their testimony, their work? Is it not the name of Jesus? And this is no mere designation, this is a mighty registration. That Name carries with it all the impact and force of heaven. Nothing can stand before that Name. World powers will seek to withstand, but they will be broken. Herod may seek to destroy the servants of the Lord and the church, but he will be destroyed out of hand. The Lord in every realm in the book of the Acts gives evidence that the name of Jesus is no ordinary name. “God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name.” It is the Name of exaltation, ascension.

Zion the Embodiment of the Name

Zion is the embodiment of the Name. Take the history of Zion again. It is the city of David, “the city of the great King”. It is the greatest name in Israel’s history. It embodies the greatest glory of their national life. The greater than David has ascended up on high, the angelic hosts have burst forth in their festal song — “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in” (Ps. 24:7). In the New Testament we have a very similar title given to the Lord Jesus — “they... crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8); and, again, we read, “Ye... killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead” (Acts 3:14,15). “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion”. Zion is the name of supreme power, supreme glory; and in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, “of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth” (Phil. 2:10). Zion then means the power and glory and sovereignty of the name of the Lord Jesus as a mighty working power, registering itself upon things spiritual and sometimes upon things temporal, a name which carries with it all authority in heaven and in earth. It is the Name of authority.

The Need to Recover the Authority of the Name

Now I suggest to you — and I expect I have your immediate agreement — that what is needed today is the recovery of the authority of the name of Jesus in the church. We use it so frequently, it comes into our language and phraseology, but we know all too little of its virtue. I am not suggesting to you now that we should seek after demonstrations in physical and temporal realms of the power and authority of the name of the Lord Jesus, but rather that what we need is the presence of the power of the Name, as something which weakens all other powers. For me that means something very much more than just demonstrations in the temporal realm. What we really do need is a power, a force at work which goes right on, persists and overcomes in a quiet, silent, steady way — when all the adverse forces are at work to frustrate, we go right on and become irresistible in a spiritual way. The thing goes on, the work is done. You marvel that it is so, when you take account of all that is set against it. That which is of interest to the Lord really does hold on its way, and not only maintains its existence, but increases, and there is nothing to account for this in any other realm than that there is somewhere a mighty divine force at work; and do what they may and will, neither the naked powers of evil nor their instrumentalities can stop it.

I believe that was the outworking of things at the beginning. You have demonstrations in the book of the Acts, but that book is a book of principles; that is, it is a book in which the Lord in the foundation of the church, in the beginning of the dispensation, is making it very plain that certain spiritual things are very real. He may remove the ways in which He does make that plain, but the reality goes on, and when you think about it, you would prefer it like that. No one wants to have a continuous, everyday repetition of the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. Do you want to see in any of the companies of the Lord's people men and women literally stricken down and carried out because they sinned against the Holy Ghost? No, but what we do want to know is that people are made aware of the fact that they cannot withstand the Holy Ghost with impunity, that it is a very dangerous thing to spiritual life and it may be to the physical also — to stand in the way of the exalted Christ. What we want is to see that Christ is Lord in His house — but not by just physical and temporal demonstrations. It is the mighty working of a spiritual power, where everything is very real and the Lord is Lord.

That is the principle of the Name. It is a great spiritual authority at work and nothing can withstand the goings. Oh, it is a great thing! I often think that Gamaliel was more inspired than we have imagined or than he knew. He did indeed utter a great truth when he said, "If it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:39). It is a hopeless thing to get in God's way. "If it be of God...". That is the only assurance you and I want — that a thing is of God. If it be not of God, then our prayer is, The Lord save us from it! But if it be of God, let all forces combine, let all tongues wag, let all devices be resorted to — it will go on! Why? Because the Name of the Lord is going to be declared in Zion. It is this mighty meaning of the Name of the Lord. It is the Name of transcendent power. That is the fact, and that is what we are concerned with.

Then, of course, there comes the challenge. They did not actually stay on mount Zion very long, even in the book of the Acts. Positionally, of course, the church is always there, but actually not always so. We were saying in our previous meditation that the church made the earth-touch all too soon. So at Corinth you find believers at strife, and saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos" (1 Cor. 1:12). This is making something of other names, and even bringing the exalted Name down in spirit to the level of an earthly party — "I am of Christ". Human likes and dislikes, preferences, antipathies and sympathies, and all the activities of human judgment, an earth-touch with a fallen creation, have made something of other names, and the glory of the Name is veiled.

Or you go to Galatia, and you find they have come down from Zion and have gone to Sinai. That is to say, they have brought everything to the level of legalistic Old Testament religion — Judaism again with its legal bondage — and the glory and the power of the Name are once more suspended. Wherever this is found to be the case, the underlying cause is ever the same. You can only know the mighty operation of that ascension power of the exalted Lord, as represented by His name, if you stay up with Him in Zion. Come down to earth in spirit, and you lose it, you forfeit it.

The Need to Get On to Higher Ground

Now, that is capable of such wide and varied application that we could never cover the ground. But we can say this in an inclusive, comprehensive way: for all the laws of spiritual power, effectiveness and glory, the need is higher ground. I would say that of almost every

situation of which I know where the glory is veiled, the power has gone, and anything but Zion conditions prevail. Corinthians, you are all divided up against one another, suspecting one another, preferring, choosing; and what is your state? You are in a state of chaos and defeat. Your need is higher ground. As believers, you have to get off this ground of mankind. If you and I, as the Lord's people who bear His Name, come down on to human ground with one another, we forsake the power and glory and working of that Name. It is not that we are going to live a make-believe life. We are very real people, and the people we have to do with are very real people too. They are very awkward, they have their weaknesses, their flaws, their faults, and many things difficult to put up with, even though they be the Lord's people. And you know quite well that, while you are taking account of people as they are in nature it is keeping you down, and keeping everything down, and the glory is being excluded and the power is suspended. The Holy Spirit, being within all the truly born-again children of God, constitutes and provides another kind of ground upon which we have definitely to place our feet. We have deliberately and persistently to regard the matter in this way: "So-and-so is of such a kind, and there is this and that about him, and if I proceed on purely natural grounds I shall not go on far with him; I shall eliminate him, and not have any fellowship with him. He is a child of God, the Holy Spirit is as much in him as in me by new birth; and he might find just as many wrongs and faults and weaknesses about me as I do about him. But we have a common ground, which is not that natural ground at all. It is the ground of Christ, and I have deliberately to trust Christ in my brother. It may be some time before He gets the upper hand there and gets what He is after, but I trust the Lord concerning him and take my hands off, and believe that the Lord can do a great thing there". Some of us would never have gone on very long with some people but for a deliberate taking of that attitude. Do you think that my brethren would have continued with me during all these years if they had not taken that attitude? They have had much to put up with, but there is something that God has done which transcends that. It is an inwrought love of God and it is an inwrought determination not to allow the natural side of things to be the ultimate criterion. There is a recognition that, however little there is, there is something of the Lord to reckon upon, and we are in His hands, and we are just going on trusting Him. That is very practical, and it is only in that way that the enemy is defeated and the Lord is glorified. Do you think the name of the Lord is glorified by divisions and strivings and conflicts, which come about because of natural conditions of temperament, disposition, and so on? No, there has been more dishonour brought to the Name of the Lord in that way than perhaps in any other. The Name of the Lord has to be glorified in Zion; that means spiritual ascendancy, the taking of higher ground. That is the personal application of it.

I will carry you much more easily with me when I make the corporate application. You will agree when I say that, speaking generally, the glory and power of the Name of the Lord Jesus are not to be found in the church today as they should be, simply because the church has come down to such an earthly level, and is so largely a thing of this world. It has lost the heavenly vision and its heavenly position. It has become a thing of orders and rites. As a matter of fact, the church very largely — of course, with notable and blessed exceptions — has tried to reconstruct an Old Testament situation in this age. You have a thing that is seen down here on the earth, with all its accompaniments, its system of vestments and what not, a reconstruction of the whole Jewish system in the Christian age, and called "Christian". No wonder the Name has gone out, and the power; it is no longer a heavenly thing. And so, however you look at it, and wherever you touch it, the Lord has shown right at the beginning that, if the church is to be in the mighty power of the Name of the Lord

Jesus, it has to leave its low levels and be in the place of the Name spiritually. The picture is quite simple, the picture of this going up to Jerusalem three times in a year of a representative company in the old dispensation.

God Governs by Spiritual Maturity

Well, the day came when the going up was due, and what happened? They left their own hamlets and villages and towns and cities wherever they were, as insular, as apart, as distant; they left it all and came away from their insularity, their dividedness, their separateness, and all came up on to one mount, where their oneness in a heavenly place was the great reality. And how blessed a thing it was for them! And the Lord established that as a testimony three times in every year, saying to them thereby, "Israel, you are not so many isolated, separate units, scattered everywhere, living your own little village life or even your own great city life. You are one people belonging to another city which is above: your names are enrolled in heaven, you are the church of the firstborn ones."

Oh, the amount there is in the Word of God to bear this out! Take Joshua 21, for example. There you have the forty-eight Levitical cities. The Levites took the place of the firstborn in all Israel, and so became in type the church of the firstborn ones. They were given cities. What are the cities? They are the local representations of THE city, that is all. They have no meaning except in their central relatedness to THE city. They are, so to speak, just microcosms of the one city of God. They are the city everywhere expressed; forty-eight — four times twelve — governmental order. Twelve is the number of government, and twelve is all the time found associated with God's people. Israel — twelve tribes. Twelve runs right through to the twenty-first chapter of the book of the Revelation. And firstborn SONS, the church of the firstborn ones, signify that. Sonship is the full thought of God. When you touch sonship in God's thought, you touch maturity in fullness, completeness of spiritual realization. "Ye are come unto mount Zion... to the church of the firstborn" (Heb.12:22,23).

Well, the Levites of Joshua 21 and their forty-eight Levitical cities are just one of the many types of this great truth, that God's thought for His people is spiritual maturity, spiritual fullness, by which He governs the world. It is a spiritual government. Oh, do I need to stop with it? You know as well as I do that the people who have gone on most with the Lord, who are most spiritually mature, are the people who really govern. They may be thoroughly inadequate in this world, they may have none of the advantages that others have here, but they know the Lord, and they are the people who in spiritual matters come to the fore. Here we have the whole principle of leadership, which is not official at all. Government is vested in spiritual measure, it is a spiritual thing. Firstborn sons, the forty-eight cities — it is all an expression of Zion, Zion gathers it all up. It is spiritual fullness, spiritual maturity by which God will govern.

The Power of the Name

It is very impressive to remember that when a name is given in the Bible, it always means something. You know the cities of the Pharaohs, and how they gave their names to their cities — Raamses for example. The city is the work of a man, it is produced by that man, and the name given means that the man is thoroughly well satisfied with his work, and he can give his name to the city. We do not, as a rule, let our names go on things of which we do not approve.

Here in Rev. 14 is Zion, and a company standing thereon, “having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads”. That means that God has no hesitation whatever in putting His Name there; He is thoroughly satisfied. The name of Jesus simply means that God is completely and perfectly satisfied with the work that the Lord Jesus has done and has given Him “the name which is above every name”. In the hundred and forty four thousand on mount Zion you have a company who have entered so thoroughly into the work of God in Christ that God does not hesitate to put His Name upon them. They bear His Name. It is Zion, with the Name of the Lord.

You see what that means. We have to come to the place where God is satisfied. And where is that? God is satisfied with nothing on this earth. It is only there in His Son in heaven, as not belonging at all to this world, that God finds His satisfaction. The Name is there, and it is out from that perfect satisfaction of God that the Holy Spirit comes with all the power of the Name. And how mighty that Name has proved to be!

But something has happened. What is it? Look at the people concerned in Acts 2. First look back a few days. “They all left him, and fled” (Mark 14:50). They did not like to have themselves associated with His Name. “Are you one of His disciples? No, I am not, I have no connection with Him!” Ashamed of His Name. Then those two as they went on the way to Emmaus, how miserable they were, utterly in despair. Why? The answer is in one word — earthliness. Their whole horizon had been earthly. They had looked for the kingdom of God in terms of earthly, temporal power, prosperity, and position. Everything for them had been a matter of this earth, this present life down here and how things would affect them here and now, and that had proved their undoing. The cross had put an end to all their hopes. But then something happened. When Christ arose, by the space of forty days He repeatedly appeared unto them. The thing was happening; they were getting a new heavenly vision, a spiritual conception of things, a transformation of outlook: and then the Spirit came and put His great seal upon it all. “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36) the Lord had said, and now they knew how true that was. All was heavenly, and no longer did that old idea of theirs hold them. When the Spirit came, they were men emancipated from this world, emancipated from the very strongest ties of which it is possible for man to conceive — religious ties. Oh, how powerful were their Judaistic bonds! But they were emancipated now. The vision of Christ in glory did what no combined forces on this earth could have done with Saul of Tarsus. It emancipated him from his Judaism. I consider that one of the greatest miracles of the New Testament — the translation in spirit of a man from earth to heaven in an instant by revelation; complete emancipation. That is the realm of the power of the Name. That is the nature of things where the glory of the Name is manifested. We need a new apprehension of what it means to be seated together with Christ in the heavenlies, a real spiritual experience of emancipation from things here in all our concerns and anxieties: so free from things here that we are in possession of everything! Paul said, “All (things) are yours”. Life is yours, death is yours, the world is yours, all things are yours (1 Cor. 3:21-23). To understand what that means is tremendous spiritual uplift. It means, in a word, that you have come into the place where the heavens do rule, and whatever the Lord wants you to have, you will have it: no matter what men or devils say about it, it is yours. Priorities? You will not get any priorities here, but you can have priorities every time if the Lord wants you to. No one knows how it is done. You may be at the bottom of the waiting list, but if the Lord requires it you go to the top. Transport or anything is yours if the Lord wants it. That is a glorious position to be in. We are quite content not to have a thing if the Lord does not want it, but if we have it in our hearts that

the Lord wants it, we have a right to go to heaven and take it; it is ours. You find it works out like that. Somehow or other it comes about when everybody says that it is impossible — it just comes about, it happens. The heavens do rule for those who belong to heaven, and live in heaven. We need to know there is a mighty authority in the Name; but in all its forms of manifestation it demands that you are in the heavenly position. The Name is impotent when you are touching this earth in voluntary association. But be in the place of the Name, then ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done. If we only know the place of the Name with regard to everything, we have the key to the whole situation. The Lord make us understand more what the Name of the Lord is in Zion.