



**SIDELIGHTS
ON BIBLE
CHARACTERS**

J.C. Philpot

SIDELIGHTS ON BIBLE CHARACTERS

Being Extracts From Sermons

Preached By

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PREFACE

The name of J. C. Philpot will need no recommendation to many into whose hands this little volume may fall. His sermons and writings have refreshed the living Church of Christ, long after he entered into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Truly, his works do follow him.

One of the features of the published sermons of J. C. Philpot, is the manner in which he introduced the subject. Believing, very forcibly, that Scripture should always be taken in the context in which the Holy Spirit placed it, the opening comments often were expositions in their own right. It was this commendable feature of J. C. Philpot's sermons which gave rise to this little volume, which is made up of extracts from the opening remarks of his sermons, particularly as they throw light on some of the Bible characters, - some prominent, others less known, - which the Holy Spirit has left in the Word, as a record for us to profit by.

Writing to Mr. Godwin in March 1948, J. C. Philpot says: "O, my friend, what is all preaching, or all the gifts in the world, unless the power of God accompany it to the soul!"

Thus may it please the Lord to accompany these spiritual fragments with divine power, even as the five loaves and two fishes were multiplied in the hands of the Redeemer, in feeding the multitude.

G. D. Buss
December 2001

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Jacob	9
Joseph	11
Moses.....	12
The High Priest.....	15
The Children of Israel.....	18
Hannah.....	20
The Psalmist David.....	24
Solomon.....	27
Lemuel	29
Jeremiah (1)	31
Jeremiah (2)	33
Baruch.....	37
Cyrus.....	39
The Minor Prophets	41
Jonah.....	44
Ephraim.....	46
Zacharias and Thomas	48
John the Baptist.....	49
Martha, Mary and Lazarus.....	51
Pilate	54
The Dying Thief	56
The New Testament Churches.....	59
The Writers of the Epistles	63
John, the Apostle (1).....	66
John, the Apostle (2).....	69
Saul of Tarsus	72
Paul	74
Gaius.....	78
The Wise and Foolish Builders.....	80
The Redeemed in Heaven.....	82
* * *	
The Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.....	86

INTRODUCTION¹

THE TYPES IN SCRIPTURE

We find in the Old Testament not only what are usually called types, that is, representative things, but typical persons, that is, representative characters. Let me explain my meaning a little more clearly and distinctly. And first, what is the exact meaning of the word “type”? The word “type” signifies, literally, a blow, and thence the effect of a blow - a mark or impression made by it. Thus we find Thomas, speaking after the resurrection: “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails.” The word “print” is, in the original, “type”; that is, the impression made by the nails driven into the hands of Christ upon the cross. If you were walking by the seaside and pressed your foot down into the damp sand, the impression left by it would be a type or mark of your foot, as well as of the force whereby you brought it down upon the sand. The Queen’s head upon the coin of the realm, is a type or representation of the head of the Queen, and is so as being the effect of a blow or other force impressed upon the die. Similarly, the metal letters, used in printing, are called types, as being representations of certain forms derived from what is termed the matrix, that is, the mould or cavity in which the letter is formed, and which gives it its peculiar shape. You will excuse these simple explanations, as they may serve to give you a clearer and fuller idea of what is meant by the word “type” when applied to spiritual things. A type, then, in this sense, means a representation of an object, and, as found in the Old Testament, a prophetic representation of a New Testament object, which is usually called the anti-type, because it corresponds to, and is the fulfilment of, the original type. The Old Testament is full of these types or prophetic representations of New Testament objects. Thus the paschal lamb was a type of Christ as the Lamb of God. The Tabernacle set up in the wilderness, was a type of the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, bodily. The brazen serpent was a type of Jesus bearing our sins on the cross. The scapegoat, over which the sins of the people of Israel were confessed and laid, was a type of Christ, as having our sins put upon His head, and bearing them away to a land of forgetfulness. In fact, all the various rites and ceremonies of the

Levitical law, together with the sacrifices which were offered up, were all types of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the blessings and benefits derived from His sufferings, blood shedding and death.

But besides these typical representations of the Lord Jesus Christ in His various covenant characters and relationships, there were also typical persons, as distinct from typical things, who represented Him in a shadowy outline, and yet sufficiently plain and clear enough to draw forth the faith of the Old Testament believers upon the Son of God, who was to be manifested in due time. Thus Joseph was a typical person, and as such, typical of Christ; the chief difference between a typical thing or type, in the strict sense of the word, and a typical person, being this, that the former is more marked, distinct, and clear than the latter. In a type, every part, or well nigh every part, has its significance, as you would see by carefully reading and spiritually understanding the solemn transactions on the great day of atonement.

But you could not say that every part of Joseph's or of David's life was typical and representative. It is quite sufficient that the main outlines should correspond with the anti-type, and not every particular. Thus, that Joseph was sold by his brethren for the price of a servant, that, though cruelly treated by them, he still loved them, that he delivered them from famine, made himself known to them, bore with all their ingratitude, fed and nourished them – in these various points, Joseph resembled and typified Jesus. But we cannot take every event of Joseph's life and say that it was a typical representation which found its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus. So with David, who was eminently a typical representative of the Lord Jesus. But, who could take all the events of David's life and make out of them a typical representation of what Christ was in the flesh? In a similar way, and with similar limitations, Aaron was a type of Christ as the great High Priest, over the house of God. Moses, as the mediator of the law on Mount Sinai, was a type of Christ as the Mediator between God and man. Jonah was a type of Christ in being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale. But I need not take up time and attention with dwelling upon these typical personages, as it is a point sufficiently clear.

But I shall now draw your observation to another point - that, in

the Old Testament, we find also what I may call, representative characters. The typical persons of whom I have just spoken, typified the Lord Jesus Christ in dim and shadowy outline, but those whom I call representative characters do not so much typify Christ, as they represent the characters of men under various phases. Abraham, for instance, is the representative character of a believer; for those who are blest with faith are said to walk in the steps of faithful Abraham; and as being called “the father of all them that believe,” (see Romans 4. 11) whether Jew or Gentile, he is made a pattern, or representative of all who believe with that same faith which was bestowed upon him. Job is a representative character, as eminent for patience, and therefore James says: “Ye have heard of the patience of Job.” Similarly, Elijah was a representative character of a man whose prayers reached the ears of God, and who, so to speak, shut and opened the windows of heaven at will. James, therefore, quotes him as an example of how “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” In the book of the Prophet Ezekiel, God mentions the names of three men, - Noah, Daniel, and Job, - as being eminent for righteousness; they may, therefore, be viewed as representative characters of righteous men.

But we have also in that wonderful Book, the Word of the living God, representative characters of things. Thus Ahithophel, a double faced hypocrite, who could go to the house of God in company with David, and then sell him into the hands of his worst foe, may be viewed as a representative of hypocrisy. Doeg, as a representative of a man of blood, who would shrink from no crime, and fall upon the priests of the Lord, when the servants of Saul would not put forth their hand against them. So Nabal is a representative of a drunken, covetous churl, whom wealth has hardened, and drunkenness besotted, till he is ripe for the sword of slaughter. Similarly, Jonathan may be accepted as a representative of warm, affectionate, brotherly love; and his father, Saul, as an awful instance of gifts without grace, and that a man may be an instrument in the hands of God to accomplish His purposes, but lives and dies in his sins.

But to what do all these observations tend? To this point, - to show that there are those people in the Word of God who are representative characters; and that as Abraham represented a believer,

Sidelights on Bible Characters

Job, one eminent for patience, and Jeremiah, a prophet who wept over the calamities of Israel; so others, such as Moab may also represent a character which is to be found in the Church of God and which will be my main object to unfold to your view that with God's blessing, you may gather up instruction, encouragement, or if need be, warning, reproof, and admonition from it.

Israel, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learned the gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass
In which they saw the Saviour's face.

The paschal sacrifice,
The blood besprinkled door,
Seen with enlightened eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood
To reconcile the soul to God.

The lamb, the dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth,
Should be the soul's defence;
For He who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of His own.

The scapegoat on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led
Was to be seen no more:
In him our Surety seemed to say,
"Behold, I bear your sins away."

Dipped in his fellow's blood,
The living, bird went free;
The type, well understood,
Expressed the sinner's plea,
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace
Throughout the sacred page
The footsteps of Thy grace,
The same in every age.
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsafed to me!

JACOB²

“I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.” Genesis 32. 26.

The person by whom, and the circumstances under which these words were uttered, must be familiar to all here who have a tolerable acquaintance with the letter of God’s written Word. I need therefore scarcely remark that they are the words of Jacob when he was wrestling with the angel. He was returning to his native land under peculiar circumstances. Though he was a child of God, his treachery against his brother, Esau, had not passed unnoticed and unchastised by the Lord. Nay, for that very reason, because he was a child, he experienced chastisement. And not only so, but he had the very same treachery that he had shown to his brother, Esau, amply repaid into his own bosom, by the Lord’s permitting Laban to deceive him in a point where his tenderest affections were concerned, besides oppressing and defrauding him continually.

After a lapse, then, of twenty years, at the Lord’s command he escapes from the hard oppression of Laban, and sets out to return to the land of his fathers and to his kindred. (see Genesis. 31. 3). But, after being miraculously delivered from the vengeance of Laban, and drawing near the borders of Canaan, he learns to his dismay that his brother, Esau, was at hand with four hundred men. The recollection of his former treachery flashing upon his conscience, immediately filled him with the deepest distress and alarm, lest his justly incensed brother should fall upon him, all defenceless as he was, and “smite the mother with the children.”

But what was Jacob’s resource? He did what every child of God must do under similar circumstances. He goes and wrestles with the Lord. We read that he “was left alone.” He allowed no person to be present while he poured out his soul before God. Thus Hezekiah “turned his face toward the wall,” when the sentence of death was felt in his conscience. (see Isaiah 38. 2). Thus Nehemiah stood in silence behind the king, when he put up a secret petition on Jerusalem’s behalf. (see Nehemiah 2. 4). Thus Moses lay at the feet of the Lord on the shore of the Red Sea, venting the secret groaning of his soul, unknown and unnoticed by the ear of man. Thus Hannah, too, left

her husband and her rival, to pour out her soul before the Lord in solitude and sorrow. (see 1 Samuel 1. 9, 10, 15). And thus, in the days of his flesh, the Man of Sorrows “went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6. 12); and again, deserted and alone in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.” (Hebrews 5. 7). Sweet and encouraging examples for living souls to follow!

But O how graciously did God interpose on Jacob’s behalf! When reduced to extremity, the Lord showed Himself. And how did He appear? In human shape; not indeed by an actual assumption of real flesh and blood, as some have vainly imagined; *that* was reserved for the time when He took part of the flesh and blood of the children. (see Hebrews 2. 14). The Son of God could only once become actually incarnate; and therefore, these appearances in the Old Testament of the Lord in human shape, were but shadowy representations, and preached to the Church, that then was, the future incarnation of the Son of God. With this “Man,” as He is called in the Word, Jacob wrestled till the break of day; and whilst thus wrestling, these words, the words of the text, burst forth, in the extremity of Jacobs case, from his lips: “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”

Fear thou not, distressed believer;
Venture on his mighty name;
He is able to deliver,
And his love is still the same.
Can his pity or his power
Suffer thee to pray in vain?
Wait but his appointed hour,
And thy suit thou shalt obtain.

JOSEPH³

“Joseph is a fruitful bough.” Genesis 49. 22.

In reading the Old Testament records, we are struck with this circumstance, that, in the case of many of those who were raised up for signal purposes in the Church of God, there was that in their birth or in their life, which was marked by some peculiar divine interposition. One feature of this nature is particularly remarkable in some of the most eminent saints and servants of God - that their mothers were naturally sterile. It was so, you know, with the mother of Isaac, the heir of promise; of Jacob; of Samson; of Samuel, in a very marked instance. It was so (to come to New Testament times) with the mother of John the Baptist. The mothers of all these eminent servants of God were naturally barren; and, as a desire for offspring amounted, in Eastern wives, almost to a passion, God seems to have taken occasion thereby to manifest His prerogative, and display the sovereignty of His power, even in the circumstances of their natural birth. You find this in the case of Joseph, also. As he was to be a marked instrument in the hands of God, eminent as a saint, and eminent as a preserver of God's people in Egypt, he had to spring, in the same way, from a barren mother. You well know that Rachel was sterile, and that, in answer to prayer, God gave her a son, whom she named “Joseph,” as a pledge (the name signifying, “he shall add”) of further offspring.

Now Jacob, before he dies, assembles his sons around him, and pronounces over them, what we cannot exactly call blessings, because to some, no blessing was given, - but he bids them gather themselves together that he may tell them that which shall befall them in the last days. Having spoken of one, and then another, he comes down, at last, to Joseph; and upon him he pronounces this special benediction, “Joseph,” says he, “is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.”

MOSES⁴

“... Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant ...”
Hebrews 3. 5.

Moses, the man of God, in being appointed to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, had the heaviest load put upon his shoulders that mortal back could bear, and, at the same time, the highest honour given into his charge that human hands could receive. It was not a task that he took upon himself, unchosen, uncalled, uncommissioned. It was no flight of heroism that impelled, no outburst of patriotic ardour that urged him on to liberate his countrymen from slavery; but the express call and commission of God. It may indeed be said of him, as is said, by the apostle, of Aaron, his brother - “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God,” (Hebrews 5. 4). Nor was it a matter of chance or good fortune - that infidel way of putting God out of the government of His own world - that such a man as Moses was found just at the very time when he was specially needed. It was not more of chance that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, than it was of chance that Jacob, four hundred and thirty years before, went down to sojourn there, or of chance that at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, they came up with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. (see Exodus 12. 41). God, who sees the end from the beginning, chose him for the work, and every step that He took with him was to qualify him for it.

If we view these steps with a spiritual eye, we shall see wisdom and power stamped upon them all. By a special interposition of God’s providential eye and hand, Moses was preserved from a watery grave by the daughter of the very king who had determined on the extirpation of his race; by her, was brought up in the court of his greatest foe; and became so enriched in her affections as not only to be made her adopted son, but, as her heir, at Pharaoh’s death, would have ascended the throne of Egypt. He was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, and had at his command all the luxuries that wealth could purchase, and all the honours that a prince and heir apparent at a royal court could receive. Yet, amidst all the blandishments of that luxurious life - in the full splendour of that regal

city, the very ruins of which now fill travellers with astonishment and admiration - grace touched his heart, and taught him to esteem, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Grace opened his eyes to see that God had a people here below, that the outcast Israel, the despised slaves who were building the treasure cities, and whose hands were soiled with mud and clay, were the chosen of the Almighty; and, cleaving to them in faith and affection, he preferred "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Thus, when Moses came to years, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" renounced all the honours and enjoyments of an earthly court, and went forth to visit his brethren. I need not mention the cause of his being obliged to leave Egypt and flee to the land of Midian, where he tarried forty years. And O what lessons he learnt there! - lessons without which he would have been utterly unqualified to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Many a stripling, hot from the university, or fresh from the academy, thinks himself fully qualified to lead the Church of God. But Moses was not qualified, when full forty years old, by all the learning of Egypt, to lead the children of Israel. He had to go for forty years into the wilderness, not merely to learn by painful experience the external hardships to be met with there, but the temptations and trials, the perils and sufferings of a wilderness heart, where there are fiery serpents that bite more venomously, and angry scorpions that sting more sharply than any serpent or any scorpion that drags its slimy trail across the barren sand. There he learnt the terrors of God in that law of which he was afterwards the typical Mediator, and there he learnt, too, the blessings of the gospel, when he saw, by the eye of faith, an incarnate God in the burning bush, and became "the friend of God" by the manifestation of everlasting love to his soul.

Time will not permit me to enter further into the character of Moses. We find him, in the Book of Deuteronomy, at the end of the forty years sojourn in the wilderness, matured, not only in years, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season, but ripened also in grace. Under the special inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost, causing His doctrine to drop as the rain, and His speech to distil as the dew, he poured forth his soul in that sweet language which

Sidelights on Bible Characters

animates every chapter and almost every word of this blessed book - what we may call this Old Testament gospel, the Book of Deuteronomy. If blessed with any measure of his faith, what a view we shall have, in our text, of the special privileges and rich favours that belong to the Church of God!

For us, then, so far as we belong to the spiritual Israel, Moses stood upon Pisgah's top, and viewed the land spread before his eyes; for us he looked down upon the tents of Israel spread at his feet, and, inspired of the Holy Ghost, to view in Israel after the flesh, Israel after the Spirit, he saw, by faith, the mystical body of Jesus - the Bride of the Lamb - the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Viewing, then, by faith, the privileges and mercies vouchsafed to the Church of God, he burst forth in the words of our text: - "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the Shield of thy help, and who is the Sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Happy are they to whom the Lord
His gracious name makes known!
And by his Spirit and his word
Adopts them for his own.

The force of their united cries
No power can long withstand;
For Jesus helps them from the skies,
By his almighty hand.

He calls them to a mercy-seat,
And hears their humble prayer,
And when within his house they meet,
They find his presence near.

Then mountains sink at once to plains,
And light from darkness springs;
Each seeming loss improves their gains;
Each trouble comfort brings.

Dear Lord, assist our souls to pay
The debt of praise we owe;
That we enjoy a gospel-day,
And heaven begun below.

THE HIGH PRIEST⁵

“A merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, ...” Hebrews 2. 17.

The grand object of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to set forth the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Into that subject we cannot now fully enter; and yet our text leads us (and may the Lord lead us by the text) into some attempt to shew who this High Priest is, of whom the apostle here speaks. And I think the simplest, and therefore the best division of the subject will be, to shew, as the Lord may enable, in the *first* place, the mind of the Spirit in the 15th verse, “We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin:” and *secondly*, the *exhortation* which flows from, and is based upon the priesthood of Immanuel, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

1.- I need scarcely take up your time by shewing at any length in what way the high priest under the law was a type and figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, there are certain points of resemblance, and certain points of difference, which it will be desirable to enter into, in order to illustrate and set forth more clearly the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in the words before us.

There were three points of *resemblance* (there were more, but I confine myself to three) between the high priest under the law and the great “High Priest over the house of God.” The first was, that the high priest offered sacrifices; the second, that he made intercession for the sins of the people on the great day of atonement, by taking incense beaten small, and, putting it on the coals which were taken off the brazen altar, with it entered into the most holy place (See Leviticus.16.12, 13); and the third, that he blessed the people (See Numbers.6. 23).

Now, in these three points did the high priest under the law beautifully resemble and set forth the great “High Priest over the house of God.” But O, how feeble the resemblance! how dim the type! how shadowy the figure! The high priest under the law could

only offer the blood of bulls and goats, which can never take away sin; the great “High Priest over the house of God” offered Himself - His own body and His own soul - that precious, precious blood, which “cleanseth from all sin.” The high priest under the law could only offer incense upon the coals taken from off the brazen altar; the great “High Priest over the house of God” is offering daily the virtue of His sacrifice by “making intercession for us.” The high priest under the law could only pronounce the blessing in so many words; he could not *give* or communicate that blessing to the soul; the great “High Priest over the house of God” can and does bless the soul with the sweet manifestations of his lovingkindness and tender mercy.

But again. There are points of *difference*, as well as points of resemblance.

1. The high priest under the law was but a man; the great “High Priest over the house of God” is God-man, “Immanuel, God with us,” the eternal “Son of the Father, in truth and love,” having taken our nature into union with His own divine and glorious Person.

2. The high priest under the law died in course of years, and was succeeded by a high priest as mortal as himself (Heb. 7. 23); but the great High Priest above liveth for evermore to “make intercession for us.”

3. The high priest under the law might be (and the apostle seems to make some allusion to the circumstance here) one who had no sympathy nor fellow feeling for the infirmities and sins of those for whom he made sacrifice; he might be like some of our priestly Dons who seem all holiness, and have no tender heart to feel compassion for backsliders, and those that are out of the way: but the great “High Priest over the house of God,” the apostle here says, is one that is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

4. The high priest under the law might be, or might not be, tempted; he might be, or he might not be, a man who knew the plague of his own heart and the workings of his fallen nature, and therefore might not be “tempted in all points” like unto those for whom he might sacrifice; but the great “High Priest over the house of God” was “tempted in all points like as we are,” and therefore can

have, and does have a fellow feeling for the tempted.¹

5.. The high priest under the law was a sinner; but the great “High Priest over the house of God” is spotless, without sin, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

With joy we meditate the grace
Of our High Priest above;
His heart is made of tenderness;
His bowels melt with love.

Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same.

But spotless, innocent, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan’s fiery darts he bore,
And did resist to blood.

He, in the days of feeble flesh,
Poured out his cries and tears;
And, in his measure, feels afresh
What every member bears.

He’ll never quench the smoking flax,
But raise it to a flame;
The bruised reed he never breaks,
Nor scorns the meanest name.

Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and his power;
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In the distressing hour.

¹ Philpot does not infer here that Christ had a fallen nature with which He was tempted. Rather he makes the point of His sympathy with His tempted people, being assailed Himself by the Evil One who nevertheless found nothing in Him. *Ed*

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL⁶

“... they came to Marah, ...” Exodus 15. 23

The children of Israel after the flesh, were a typical people; and therefore, the dealings of God with them were typical and figurative of His dealings with the spiritual Israel. When we see this, and read the Old Testament Scriptures with an enlightened eye, what beauty does it add to the sacred page! We read these records then, not as so many historical documents, but as descriptive of the children of God, and of His mercy, love and grace towards them. And thus their experience becomes brought home to our own heart and our own bosom. We can see in them, our own features, and read in the dealings of God with them, the dealings of God with our own souls now.

I need not run through the history of the children of Israel to prove this. Every step they took is, more or less, a proof that the Lord dealt with them outwardly, as He deals with His spiritual Israel inwardly. Their state, for instance, in Egypt, typified the death and darkness of the people of God before they are quickened by the blessed Spirit. The paschal lamb of which they partook, and the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and sideposts, showed forth the redemption of Christ, and the application of His precious blood to the conscience. The passing through the Red Sea signifies the baptism wherewith they are baptized, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; and their seeing their enemies dead upon the seashore, signifies the rejoicing of a child of God at finding his sins cast into the sea, and overthrown into dead carcasses by the mighty power of Christ.

But we come now to a strange passage in their history. They little expected, as we should little expect, that so heavy a trial would come immediately upon the back of this astonishing deliverance. And what was this trial? “They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.” In this humid climate, we can scarcely conceive what a privation this must have been. But we should not like, even in this wet clime, to be without water for three days. No water to drink, no water to wash with! But look at this vast

multitude, amounting to two million, wandering in a barren desert, with a scorching sun above, and parched sands beneath; men, women, children, and cattle, languishing, and all but for dying of thirst! And this for three days! One can scarcely conceive what a privation; what a scene of horror it must have been. But, at the end of three days, water is discovered. They catch a glimpse of palm trees in the wilderness, and perhaps see the glimmering of streams beneath them. You may well conceive what joy would fill the camp. We may well imagine what a universal shout of exultation there would be. What hurrying on to partake of the waters that glistened before their eye in the distance! But alas! when they came there, a further disappointment awaited them. "They came to Marah, and they could not drink of the waters of Marah." Though for three days they had been without water, and were dying from thirst, yet, when they came to these waters, they were so bitter and brackish that absolutely they could not drink! What a blow! What a stroke upon stroke! This was, indeed, striking the dying dead. This was, indeed, adding grief to their sorrow, and heaping calamity upon calamity.

Well, what did they do? What you and I, no doubt, would have done. They murmured and rebelled, and cried out against Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, with it's beautiful Nile, and leading them into this wilderness, where, for three days, they had no water; and when they came to water, it was so bitter they could not drink. And what did Moses do? Did he join with them? Did he encourage their murmuring, or take part in their rebellion? No. He did what he ever did, and what every child of God must sooner or later do - he "cried unto the LORD." And did he cry in vain? Was the Lord a "God afar off, and not at hand"? Was His hand shortened, that it could not save, or His ear heavy, that it could not hear? No. The same almighty arm that had brought them through the Red Sea, found a way of escape. "The LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."