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LaH 338

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Sermon preached by Mr. J.E.Hazleton on the 1st December 1901.

Text: 1 Pet 3. 22. "Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

What a solemn difference there is between profession and possession, between a mere professor and one who has the smallest grace in possession! The professor is always satisfied with generalities and speculations and mere platitudes! The possessor is ever an anxious seeker, a resolute enquirer, a restless applicant at the Throne of Grace! The professor may talk about OFFERS OF GRACE! The possessor will have nothing to do with anything but the OPERATIONS OF GRACE! He will be deeply concerned to know his interest in the work of Christ, and to know it by an experimental knowledge, by the teaching of God the Holy Spirit in his heart and upon his conscience. God's children who are here this morning, who have been privileged to make their calling and election sure, remember well the time when they were deeply anxious and exercised as to whether they had grace or whether they had no grace, and you, dear souls, who are here this morning, just beginning to be exercised about spiritual things, beginning to feel and to seek after them, are you not fully persuaded in your own minds that nothing short of a precious Christ revealed in your hearts as the "hope of eternal glory", will ever satisfy you? There is all the difference in the world between the living and the dead soul, between one content with the form, and one who is content with nothing short of the POWER, and I do feel increasingly our need of POWER, - the POWER FROM ON HIGH.

What does our Lord say in His Word concerning possessors, living souls? "For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness", and it is the greatest of mercies to have souls that have been made to long for Jesus, to long for life, to long for power, to long for deeper, sweeter manifestations of the love of God! It is a mercy to have a spirit that hungers for goodness, and that pants and thirsts for the God of His salvation. These desires, these longings and this hunger are infallible evidences of the work of grace within, and I am confident that no one ever desired Christ, I am certain that no one ever wondered why Christ should ever condescend to notice such a worthless one as he or she, who had no grace in the heart, who had not an interest in what Christ has done, in what Christ is doing, and in what Christ will do for His beloved people, and so dear friends, poor and needy as we feel ourselves to be, yet the longings and desires are tokens that we are one with Christ in death, one with Christ in resurrection and one with Christ in ascension and glory, for these desires and this life and these blessings can alone proceed from those who are united to a living, loving Saviour, and therefore this great and glorious word this morning, containing so much, is the message to everyone of God's little ones here, to every longing, hungry soul! You have a Saviour Who is passed into

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the Heavens and is at the right hand of God, angels, authorities and powers being subject unto Him.

Christ, to the believer is ALL AND IN ALL. John Berridge in one of those quaint Zion songs of his sings

Some fast by Calvin hold,
And some for Luther fight,
And each is mighty bold,
And seemeth mighty right,
But though with Calvin I agree,
YET CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL TO ME!

and this is just what I feel.

Now let us look at our text this morning from two points of view. First of all let us speak about the position that Christ now occupies in Heaven at the right hand of God, and then about the dominion which He exercises, - angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.

THE POSITION THAT CHRIST NOW OCCUPIES. How wonderful were those forty days which intervened between His Resurrection from the dead and His ascension into the Heavens! Have you noticed that our Lord's public career upon earth opened and closed with intervals of forty days? At the commencement of His public ministry He was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness tempted of the Adversary! At the close of His career upon earth He tarried with His disciples forty days! (What can be the meaning? We find the number forty appearing again and again in God's word, and always as signifying a mysterious measured space of waiting, followed by great and glorious results

For forty days the Spies went up and down the land of Canaan, examining it, and the land of Canaan was the type of Gospel rest. For forty days the Lord tarried with His disciples and Luke tells us that during that time He was speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; in other words He was leading them up and down the land of Gospel rest, and was unfolding to them the astounding and unsearchable riches of His Grace. Oh what outpourings of His full Heart there must have been during those days! what an opening up to their understanding of the blessed things revealed in His Word, and of His purposes of love and mercy which were to run down all the ages! (I take it that what Jesus said to them during those days was all brought again to their remembrance by the blessed Spirit of God after Jesus had entered into the kingdom of Heaven, and in the epistles of (Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John we have the unfoldings of the kingdom which Jesus gave during those forty days in which He tarried with His people.)

For forty days Elijah tarried in Horeb before he received the revelations of God, and so at the close of these forty days ten after the close of the forty - the Spirit of the living God

came down at Pentecost with power, and the disciples went forth to preach of Him they loved.

At the close of those forty days, Jesus, to Whom Bethany was one of the sweetest and most sacred of spots, led His disciples up the slopes of the Mount of Olives so familiar to them all. Let us remember that our Lord was a true and perfect Man, and with all the feelings of manhood, unsullied by sin. When we are about to take farewell of a district in which we have long lived, we delight to pay a visit to the old house and go round about and look upon the familiar scenes, and so our Lord led His disciples up as far as Bethany, it seems to me to take a last look at that beloved village, a last look at that home which He had sanctified with His presence and the inmates of which He loved with all His Heart.

And then He speaks! They gather around Him, and oh what love unutterable there must have been in His parting look! What untold riches in His Word of blessing. What holy unction fell into their hearts as He lifted up His Hands and blessed them, and in the act of blessing He rises into the deep blue of Heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and earthly communion with Him they loved closed and they stand gazing up into Heaven.

Our Lord's REAL BODY has gone to a REAL PLACE! The locality of Heaven we have nothing to do with. Suffice to say it is a place, and perhaps not so distant a place as we are prone to suppose. (Our eyes can only see the material; our vision cannot pierce beyond the veil of time and sense. He passed within the veil, and, as He entered, the entire company of the Heavenly host, saints and angels, must have struck their harps and tuned them to a sweeter anthem than ever before, for the risen Redeemer had achieved the victory over sin, Satan, death and Hell, and we can but faintly picture that song when, advancing through the ranks of the Heavenly host, looking upon the sinners whom He had redeemed with His most precious blood, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High, sitting down and expecting until His enemies become His footstool!)

This was for the good of His people, for their pure and unmixed good. He said to His dear disciples, and to you and to me, "It is expedient for you that I go away", or as we are told the words might more correctly be rendered, - "It is for your profit that I go away." Their eyes had been dimmed by their sorrowful hearts, and they did not see at first that He was just going away to carry on His people's cause above; that He was just going away for His people's good, and that He was going to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to work in His people; that He was going to enter into the Heavens for the safe convoy, guidance and protection of all the marching, travelling host of God.

He is on the right hand of God first of all in our humanity. The same blessed lips that had partaken of the piece of fish and honeycomb after His resurrection are there at the right hand of the Majesty on High! The same blessed Body that knew care, weariness, pain and heartbreak is in the glory now! The same Humanity which our Lord wore upon earth is in Heaven now! And we need, beloved, the sympathy of Jesus, and we have it in the Christ of God. We need His sympathy in our daily life, daily temptations, daily conflicts, daily difficulties. Here we are in a cruel, heartless world! Often we feel isolated from all, and prone are some of the children of God in seasons of isolation, and depression to say, "No one cares for me". But is it not unspeakably precious to remember that in Heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, is a Man, a real Man full of sympathy, possessing infinite knowledge, Whose Heart is filled with unspeakable tenderness, Whose Love is constant and unchangeable, and Who has gone up to that place just to be ready and in a position to help you best and to help you most in this your hour of need! The very fact with which we started that your soul palpitates with heavenly desires, that your spirit longs and pants for the Lord you love, that you are looking to HIM ALONE for salvation, demonstrates that you are united to that Man upon the Throne and that because His Humanity is there, yours and mine, through the Grace of God, shall one day be there too, and so the humanity of our blessed Lord is a sweet source of strength and comfort to His dear people. But we need these truths revealed and applied to us by God the Holy Spirit. Much as we talk about the humanity of Christ, how often, if one may speak for the rest, we lose sight of the fact, and the moment we think of God out of Christ we begin to sink into darkness and legalism! The moment we lose sight of the Christ of God, that moment begins to envelope us in darkness. The infinite distance between us tends to sink us downwards to despair; a legal spirit gets possession of us, and we are prone to try experiments with some work of righteousness of our own, forgetting that Christ "hath perfected forever them that are sanctified". In other words, He has perfected forever them that are set apart for Himself, for "know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself.

By His assumption of humanity when He came from Heaven to earth, He, as Luther puts it, enwrapped Himself in our guilt and in our curse. He bore that curse away! He atoned for all that load of guilt, and still wears our humanity and nature. In the Christ of God we have a precious, sympathizing Friend Who is now in Heaven at the right hand of God, the place of dignity, and the place of power, and that to help and succour His dear children. You are no stranger to Jesus, no stranger to Jesus in your sorrow, no stranger to Jesus, poor sinner, in your conviction! Have you been convinced of sin, of righteousness and judgment to come! Look at that poor prodigal. His riotous life, his spendthrift career is all forgotten by the one kiss of his Father, all buried in everlasting oblivion, and He whose love is portrayed in that most touching of all parables,

is at the right hand of God, "the same yesterday, today and forever." Returning backslider despond not for you have not to do with God out of Christ, but with One Whose forgiving love and tenderness can meet your case, and Who is at the right hand of God to heal your backslidings. Dear child of God, touched to the quick by sorrow and by trial, enduring it may be the loss of worldly substance, suffering from the blighting of past affections, realising the chasm of death and bereavement between yourself and your loved one, - you are cared for by Him Who is at the right hand of God, by Him through Whom the worlds were made, by Him Who in Christ lavishes the same care upon the tiny dewdrop as upon the sun in the Heavens, and Who in the realm of His Grace proves that

The feeblest lamb in all the flock,
Shall have the Shepherd's care!

His Humanity then is at the right hand of God, and our humanity is there. He is at the right hand of God as our Representative. He has not only gone up there full of sympathy and so wearing His Humanity, but He has gone up to transact His people's business there. If He had continued on earth, He would not have been a High Priest. The exercises of His Priestly office had to be carried on in Heaven. He entered within the veil to see that the interests of the one family sustained no damage, to carry right through the business which He had taken the responsibility of, and which has been entrusted into His hands. Our Representative on the strength of His own merits and work will see that all His clients have justice done to them. The wisest of men who are sent on an embassy are often unable to compass that for which they are sent, but what power or deceit can overreach the Christ of God! There He is "within the veil", the Representative of His people'. There He is tender, loving, gracious, true; and did this great Advocate and wonderful Counsellor before the throne, ever reject a brief, if I may so speak, that was put into His Hands? Did he ever reject one client who came with a "Lord, I am a sinner; I must put my case into Thy Hands; I have no hope but in Three!" Has He ever rejected such a client? Has He ever rejected any of His dear people who, realising as they daily do, that they daily sin, come to the Advocate of the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous? Has He ever declined to give advice as Chamber Counsellor to those feeling their need of guidance and wisdom? He is at the right hand of God the Father to carry all our business right through, and to use the imagery in the book of Ruth, He will give Himself no rest until He hath accomplished that which He hath desired. There He is to present the prayers of all saints. I love that word in the Revelation, - "the prayers of ALL saints" not simply the pleading of patriarchs and prophets, Apostles and martyrs, men strong in faith giving glory to God, but it means the groaning, the glance, the tear, the sigh, for where there is a glance heavenward, where there is a groan over the hatefulness of sin, there is the prayer of a saint. ALL saints! The tremulous aspiration of smitten

penitence, the unuttered petition of those who are in humble homes. We know the ease which comes when we can unburden our troubles into a brother's ear, and we know of the blessedness that comes when we can unburden ourselves before this great and glorious Advocate, realising a little of what His humanity and presence at the right hand of the Father is. There comes over the troubled soul then a hush and a peace which "passeth all understanding", and which the world can neither give nor take away.

He gives Himself entirely to the one case that is brought before Him, and at the same time to the millions of cases brought to Him. How and why? Because He is GOD AS WELL AS MAN! His Ear is open as long as you remain at the Mercy Seat, to all you have to say, and He gives you all His time. Was there ever such an Advocate, such a glorious One as we have in Jesus?

Lastly on this point, He is at the right hand of God as God's equal. First He is there in our humanity, then as our Representative and lastly He is there as God's EQUAL. To which of the angels did the Father ever say "Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" He is EQUAL to the Father as touching His Godhead! Inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood!

He is at the right hand of the Father with Almighty power, human sympathy, and unspotted integrity, all united in one Person, the embodiment of grace, beauty, tenderness and love! Here is the only stay for the poor sinner; here is the Rock of our salvation in the storms and stress of life; here is the glorious Foundation whence we derive inspiration and strength for the service to which the Lord is pleased to call us.

Lastly, a few words on the DOMINION WHICH CHRIST NOW EXERCISES. He is there with the angels, authorities and powers made subject unto Him.

ANGELS! It must mean first of all the whole host of spiritual beings, - good angels of whom we read in Scripture that had Jesus chosen, He could have called on His Father and He would have given Him twelve legions of angels. A legion among the Romans would have numbered 1200 men, and Jesus said He could have had twelve legions of angels to demonstrate His authority, but "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2.7), and therefore the legions of angels awaited His bidding in the Glory world.

Angels are subject unto Him as the agents of His Providence! The angel opened the prison door for Peter, and in ways which we cannot understand, the angels come and go under the authority of Him Who is at the right hand of the Father. Wherever a child of God is, there is to be found the foot of the Ladder, and where that child of God is in the desert, lonely and in isolation, there is the foot of the Ladder, and the Lord God at the top, and the angels ascending and descending upon that ladder, and God's children have

often the deepest, sweetest realisation of the presence of the Lord in trial and in sorrow.

But evil spirits are more especially referred to here. An evil spirit entered into the heart of Judas; Satan filled the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira his wife. But say you, we are free from their influence! Indeed, indeed you are not! God's children are free from their dominion but not from their assaults. God's people know the power of temptation, and the evil spirits that are to and fro harass the children of the living God. All the hosts of evil angels are made subject unto Him Who is at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and temptation and trial in this respect, so sanctified, tend but to sharpen the faith and excite the love, and urge to prayer on the part of the tried family.

All holy angels are subject unto Him; Satan and all the hosts of evil are subject unto Him and it is His Hand that controls all, and

All shall comē and last, and end
As shall please our Heavenly Friend!

Authorities and Powers too are made subject unto Him, and by this I understand, earthly governments and administrations. What unsettledness and perplexity the world is enveloped in! We become tremulous often in viewing human governments and kingdoms from our own standpoint. Who can say that the world is growing better? If we mean by that term that the world is becoming more submissive to God, more ready and content to walk in the ordinances of God, more reverential towards the Word of God, we are certainly mistaken in imagining that it is becoming better. On the contrary it is steadily growing worse and worse, but authorities and powers are subject unto Him although as God's Word says evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, and He is expecting until His enemies shall be made His footstool. The Gospel is being sent forth over the whole world, and let us bless and praise God for it, for it is the POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION unto every one that believeth. God by His Gospel is now taking out a people for His name, and He is controlling by the Hand of His Power all things in the interest of His elect, and in the accomplishment of His work. This passage as applied by God the Holy Spirit will tend to steady the minds of God's dear people in a day of confusion and of fear, and I pray that it will lead us more and more to enter into the secret of the Lord's presence, to realise more and more in private, on the knee of prayer and before our open Bibles, the interest, deep true and tender, that the Lord takes in the minutest concerns of His people, - those Whom He has redeemed.

Then too, having in view the second part of our text this morning we by it are made steadfast and enabled to plant our feet more firmly against the encroachments of an infidel world, and so none of these things shall move us, for our Saviour Hod has gone into the Heaven, and angels, authorities and powers are all subject unto Him.

"All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth", and the power is given to Him to forgive sins. Is there one here who mourns

and hates sin that once he loved? Every penitent sinner, every mourning pardoned sinner, is qualified for Jesus. A Saviour He is from the guilt and power of sin. Come then, poor sinner, cast yourself at His Feet and you will hear the gracious word, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven". The power to forgive sins is His through the shedding of His most precious Blood!