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Substance of Two Sermons preached by our Pastor

on Sunday, December 1, 1974.

Morning Lesson. Isaiah 63. vv. 15-19. & 64.

Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down,
that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. Isaiah 64. 1.

The Hebrews by divine grace and inspiration as here, used beautiful majestic symbolism, and those metaphors as contained in the language of the Text are abundantly with human interpretation, conveyed to the hearts of the living family of God, and spiritually, internally by His benign light and revealing grace, and experimentally in the life and path to heaven. So in a certain sense, when you receive the unction of the Holy One you need not man to teach you. You have in your soul an abundant understanding of it.

Let me put us to the test in relation to the first verse. We have here the symbolism of the heavens and mountains and flowing down at the Lord's presence. What is the meaning, the spiritual interpretation of 'heavens', and the 'rending of the heavens'? It is a rather amazing and beautiful term, the rending of the heavens. What are heavens? how do they apply to you? Why do you need God to rend them?

Another outstanding metaphor is 'mountains'. I do not wish to overlap the exposition of a good man, but to read the completeness of the verse. So what are mountains to you? Have you put up a request this morning to Almighty God that the mountains might flow down? There is only one way for them to flow down, - at His presence. It is my sacred duty and privilege, and I hope it will be my joy to work it out with you. First, you will notice how this impassioned plea opens in a wonderful way; "Oh!" a little interjection that expresses all of the concentration and intensity and vehemence of desire, sorrow, anxiety, pain, and especially of expectation. It comes right up from the bottom of the heart and being, and through you, out of your mouth to God. It may be inarticulate; the internal intercession of the Spirit, Bless God, He is able to interpret sighs and groans: no human being can. That is not detrimental to love and union. It is the prerogative of God to have the inner sanctuary of the soul to Himself, and

from the depths of your being, "Oh" comes forth and expresses all your pain, crosses, distresses, trials, misery, happiness, bliss, intense longing and glorious expectation. "Oh!" Does it come from your soul this morning? If I take a cross-section of the congregation this morning, I would judge those of you in difficulty, trouble, perplexity have a number of times walked across the room and said to the Lord; "Oh." All in your burdened, pressed, anxious spirit goes to heaven in that interjection. Then think of the miracle named: the Lord knows exactly the meaning of it. In heaven's high courts the Father Himself, as it passes through the mediation of Christ, knows and receives that Oh.

I felt I should just refer to this, and I believe it is very impressive, beautiful, precious indeed. After all, we read in Romans 8, "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings ~~the~~ which cannot be uttered." They are not expressed verbally. If I stop here with you, I would suggest probably if you take a retrospective view, you are able to remember the days when you knew nothing much about groaning: now you have come into it. Probably some if they saw you would say you are a kill-joy. They just do not understand. You have many groans: you do not necessarily wear a long face all day. A personal word to you. I have continually been greatly impressed in the course of my ministry, and I think of the late dear Emily Vine. In all the tremendous suspense before she knew her dear son was alive, until she heard he was a prisoner of war, she sat under the pulpit and she still had mostly a cheerful countenance. O the groans! the concentrated groans out of her soul to heaven. "Oh!" I will just say this to you: the Lord has given you a promise, and the promise of His will and divine purpose is; "the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."- transmuted: the occasion of sorrow is turned into joy. "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." These are most precious souls. We could think of characters in the New Testament. Mary Magdalene wanted to go to the sepulchre and let her tears fall into that sacred place. So do you see what I mean? Happy mourners!- groaners by the Spirit, because this will be fulfilled; "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." - a sheaf! think of it! bundles of corn! A word to the wise, then I proceed. You who are in the

secret of it will have heard and understood.

So I will take a further step. What does 'Oh' relate to? There is one blessed truth I should name to you: it is this. I quote: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." What does it mean? If God has given you spiritual life you will realise that your help "cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." He will be the one and the only one who can do anything for you. You will be stripped of earth and the flesh, and of every prop, of all you had to rely on in the earth, and your longing eyes will look up to God, "to the end that man should find nothing after Him." This is it. So what I am trying to say is, you come to the place where the only thing is for God to rend the heavens. You are looking up. The only thing is to lift up your eyes to the hills, from whence cometh your help. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." You have only one hope, and that is for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down. Human power is impotent: you cannot seek relief or help from man. You have no help in self. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." That is the word of God to you. Your only hope is for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down.

If we take a wider dimension, it is the only hope for the Church of God in the world: it is the only hope for a local Church of God. There will never be a future unless the Lord rends the heavens and comes down. It is the same for families; personally; for those in business; in this dear nation, and for this world. The only hope is for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down. In the serious developments in the earth, and we realise in our bones and in our spirits who fear God that we are approaching the end of this dispensation, (it may be a long while yet) but pressing daily on your spirits do you not find your heart turned to the Second Advent? the second Coming of Christ as the only hope? My spirit is turned alone in that direction. There is no other way but for Him to come in the clouds with power and great glory. So prayer rises to Him as the only hope of the world.

"Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down." This becomes a personal experience. If I take it up with you who know the First Advent, the time of love, of God's great blessing, the forgiveness of sins, a living hope, full deliverance, and you are wading through the days

of darkness which are many, you are looking for the Second Coming. Christ says; "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Christ is coming again to you in the clouds, "with power and with great glory." I can say that is the hope and the expectation of my soul: I am waiting for my Lord's returning. Can you go along with me? You see the earth in convulsions, the instability of currency and of everything in the world, - all finite things, the intrusion of the power of Anti-Christ, the subtle menace of Communism, and everything undermined in the material world so from week to week you hardly know where you will stand. Do you therefore, child of God, feel this is the expression of your soul; "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down."? The heavens are dark enough; the clouds are black; they gather thick and thunder loud. Only the Lord can rend them and come down.

The Lord did rend the heavens and come down in the Incarnation of His only Son. It was as though the heavenly host broke bounds over Bethlehem in singing the great Gloria. This is a good subject for us in the gospel. The heavens are rent. The Saviour descended and assumed a holy humanity, and the heavens were rent for us. When fully to the joy of your soul the Lord assured you of salvation, and you heard and received the amazing blessing of His peerless Name, Jesus shone, and the heavens were rent for you. "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens."

Surely when there are such clouds and darkness, and things are ominous, black and distressing and overwhelming, to some especially, your only plea is that the Lord would rend the heavens and come down. How wonderful is the prayer that is before us in the Word of God! So we are able to glean comfort, strength and edification from this prayer of the ancient Church.

I will take another step, and ask, what is the meaning of the beautiful symbolism 'heavens'? Heavens in the Bible stand for several things: first, the ethereal heavens, the firmament, and it is clear as the judgments of God are recorded in the Scriptures, that the heavens were shut up; closed; sealed. For three and a half years there was no rain or dew. The heavens were sealed by God as a sore judgment, and a devastating famine followed. I am sure many people looked in agony at the firmament and thought there would never be another spot of moisture again. The heavens were shut up. How I do thank God for this beautiful narrative, as the prophet at a

suitable time ordained by God, went up to the top of Carmel and put his face between his knees, and sent his servant to look toward the sea. The servant said; "There is nothing." and you say the same. I have said it many times in my ministry, and from every facet. "There is nothing." There is no sign of deliverance." Are any of you in this place? It is the same for poor souls desiring mercy, as they keep going, as dear old Mr Ashdown who sat on the gallery. One day I preached in the School-room from; "Go again seven times," and there was a ray of hope in his poor soul. Are any of you in it? "There is nothing." Looking at your soul, life, all; there is nothing. It is the same in prayer, or in the ministry, or in trials: there is not a sign. "Go again seven times." "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." That's it; after three and a half years.

I will go aside to say to you, there is no doubt about it, we must pass through heavy trials for chastening that will last according to the pleasure and will of God. The Lord dealt with His people here. Your soul is disciplined and chastened here: it is not hell fire for you. It means there are certain things that are most distasteful, painful, agonising you must pass through. They are spread over a period of time; they are not for a few minutes. One day you will see why. Three and a half years was right; perfectly right. God's character was vindicated. You might say; "Let it be six months." Some last for ten or twenty years. You waded through deep waters and say; "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down." That is all your hope: you are shut up to this.

So first the firmament, or the atmosphere, which reaches for a hundred miles above the earth. The Lord shut the heavens. He controls them. Think of the control of the terrestrial world by God! How it will inspire in your breast reverence and trembling and adoration. He can drown the world, He has said He will not do it again. The element water covered every part of the earth: only those in the ark were saved. The next form of destruction will be by the use by the Creator of the element fire. Some of you know of fire: it fills your mind with terror, and the Almighty will use that form of destruction the second form of destruction in this planet. Are you not looking up and saying; "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down."? I will name this, the sweet mercy of the narrative

concerning the little cloud. Has God given it to you? There arose a little cloud out of the sea, about the size of a man's hand. It was a sign that He was rending the heavens, and soon there would be a great rain. If it should be suitable to your soul and circumstances He will say to you; "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord rends the heavens,- sends rain upon the earth." There is a promise there: "until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

'Heavens' also stand for the third heavens; the seat of His majesty and glory. It is this that is especially referred to in the Text.

'Heavens' also refer to the ministry of the gospel of Redemption, because it is by this method the Lord waters the earth. When you think of the promulgation of the gospel,- good news, from the time that the Lord said; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,"- the whole human race, men and women in all countries have known dew and rain for the whole period since Pentecost, and the Lord has rent the heavens and come down. So the sacred word of the ministry comes under the symbolism of 'heavens'. "the heavens...shall hear the earth." You see therefore, the whole of the metaphor in the beauty of it: the plentiful rain and dew of the Spirit; the preaching of the everlasting gospel through the world.

Notice; "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens." I need the Lord to give wisdom to express this. I will put it in this way. The heavens did not need rending in the time of man's innocency. 'Rend' the heavens suggests you need a communication from heaven to you. You need something to come from heaven to you. In the time of man's innocency there was immediate communion between the Creator and His creatures. I suggest to you when man completely, solemnly fell; violated the command of God and became sinners, and fell from the image of God to the image of Satan, and was expelled from Eden, it was as though the heavens became black and sealed. It was the righteous anger of God and the curse for sin, and it was as though He sealed the heavens. Here is man, a polluted, ruined, wretched sinner, and he looks up and the heavens are sealed. Will there ever be a passage? will there be a manifestation of divine mercy? "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down." Amen.