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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor

on November 3. 1974. Sunday.

Morning Lesson. Revelation 5.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7. vv. 13-14.

It is in sacred and sweet harmony with the season and occasion that we should be led by the Spirit to this amazing portion of the Word of God, and to this Text in particular. Because here we have one of those amazing, supernatural, divine revelations that are celestial, ethereal, and relate to the third heavens,- Paradise itself, and such an opening of Paradise that it became visible to a saint of God, His servant John on this planet. It is really well-nigh incredible to human understanding that one should be able to look into heaven itself while still on earth. The key is that he, as we often pray to be, was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. He was so totally possessed by the Spirit, and received such heavenly transport by the Spirit that he was largely unconscious of earth, and saw within the veil itself.

Before I endeavour to introduce the subject further I will put it to the congregation; have any of you received such a revelation in any degree? that is to say, what obtains within the veil: Christ and all the saints and the holy angels and elders; His Throne, and the rainbow round about it? the wonderful music of heaven,- the new song, and a sight of the wonderful gathering; a universal and cosmopolitan gathering out of all nations in eternal bliss lauding, praising, adoring the Lamb on the Throne? Have you received anything at all that is identified with the opening of the heavens and a sight or hearing of that which is within the veil? It is possible for God to give His dear people a realisation of the opening of the heavens. In a certain sense and degree, every time you go to the Throne of Grace and find sweet access; every time your prayers pass through the priestly mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the heavens are open to you. Times when you have heavenly transport and see the glory of Christ, the heavens are open to you and everything here recedes. There is also not only seeing but hearing that which is within the veil; all the heavenly melody of music, and the whole host of heaven singing the eternal song. It is sometimes wafted through the open heavens to our souls, and we respond in a feeble way and join in the song. So I put it to you as a question, and secondly, a form of this may be sought with a certainty of the possibility, and the amazing

effect on your ransomed soul,- "Worthy the Lamb; for He was slain for us."

I do not like the use of numerals concerning spiritual experience, but I think of four or five times when I have known this in my soul. Once years ago the Lord awakened me early one Sunday morning, not to look on the earth: to look on an amazing sight. To see many I had ministered to in the Church of God clothed in heavenly robes in heaven. I shall obviously never lose the sense of that beautiful sight of the dear saints before the Lamb in white robes: it is so celestial and supreme. I saw a number who had passed through great tribulation, and those we communed with and ministered to in beautiful garments of white. So I know the wonder of this. Also thirty-five years ago at least, I knew what it was to hear the melody and music of heaven wafted by the Spirit from the ethereal regions to one's soul. Once you have heard this you have heard the melody of all the saints and thousands of children.

"Around the Throne of God in heaven,
Thousands of children stand;
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band,"

and that afternoon I heard the melody of that heavenly music. I heard the saints and the children.

So what a contrast from the miseries of this sinful world is an ethereal visitation and hearing, and this John received. I would press on your tender spirits and loving, believing hearts the wonderful possibility of having this experience in your souls,- the heavens opened and seeing within the veil His Throne. You will never cease to wonder on earth at the glory of the rainbow, and when you see about His Throne in glory all the glorious hues, the divine perfections in Jehovah Jesus in salvation, mercy, clemency, compassion, divine love, peace, and blessing, O the wonder of it! In all the trials you have there will be a rainbow: deliverance; for sorrow, comfort; for distress, relief; for pain, release; immortality, bright robes, mansions "and my people shall never be ashamed."

A few times over the years I have wished I could have gone straight from the pulpit to heaven, and not gone down the steps into the vestry, without the shadow of doubt. So what I want to present to you is, this blessed joy is possible. The Lord can do it for you, and you will be weaned from the world. There is a returning, when the ecstasy passes, and the joy decreases, not the reality of it,- and you still have corruption within. I wanted to underline this: you find you still have ties to hold you a little while. Our own apostle said he was in a great strait: he wished to depart but he had ties to hold him longer. It was needful for the Church that he should stay for a certain period. Some of you here in the seventies, approaching the allocated time; you must feel as your friends are taken around seventy, it brings it home to you that these are your last days. You have just a

little longer. There are ties, bonds to hold you for a further period. Soon it will be that the Lord will send for you. Are you ready? Are the heavens open? Is the glory of Christ irradiating your soul? Is the Holy Spirit filling you? Have you felt something of the beginning of heaven in your soul recently? I have a feeling of eternal Spring; a difference; a tremendous change to all the monotony of life and the miseries of life; a sense of peace, of birds singing. You say; "It is November." Never mind; there are all the signs of the springing forth of life. This is an introduction.

Undoubtedly my mind has been led sweetly to this because the Lord has seen fit to call home to glory Ruth Verrall, and Nell Thwaites, and Mrs Hoadley, and now Mr Haizelden at Croydon,- some of those we have known and love, and enjoyed fellowship with. It is a sight within the veil, in striking contrast to this side; a sight of the saints in white robes. I felt this morning I would desire to come to this particular part of the Text, namely; "These are they which came out of great tribulation." I want to speak of tribulation, and the amazing thing is, they have come out of it. And tribulation is qualified: it is great, but they come out of it. If we refer to the scene as John beheld the great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues,- wonderful, is it not? People from Britain, France; all countries; India, the U.S.A.; black, yellow, white as to their skin; all dialects; how wonderful! When you think of the love of God to His children: it would do us good to meet some on earth. And having seen the great multitude, what is the point that arises? Shall I be there? am I one of them? Has the Lord chosen me? In the finality of the meaning of tribulation, shall I be one of the great multitude?

I will say a word to our young friends, and I hope they will listen to it. I say it in affection and love. Do not forsake your place of divine worship. There you were presented to the Lord: there you are prayed for. There you will come, perhaps, to be married, and there you will be brought to be buried. Do not forsake the Church of God. The Lord give you to know the meaning of it. All else will fade and pale in comparison. Do not forsake the Church of God.

This word in my heart to speak has developed from; Am I one of the great multitude? What is the all-important factor? It is wonderful to get on well in life; to do well in business; to be successful in a profession; or to be a good housewife and mother, or a useful member of society. The over-riding factor is to be one of the Lord's people; one of His children so it is well with your soul and you are among the great multitude. It is not a matter of how much you leave, and for it to be published in the Daily Telegraph: it is a matter of whether you are in heaven. So what about it? Have you a living hope?

As John saw the great multitude and heard the music, so one of the elders

answered, - elders; those of exalted rank in the heavenly order. "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" He knew well, but it brought from the apostle John a response. "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest." This eminent man who wrote the Book, the Apocalypse, well realised that his knowledge of that which was within the veil was limited, and certainly this applies to us. There are many things we have little knowledge of within the veil. So he preferred to say concerning this; "Sir, thou knowest." There are things that we know not, but we shall know hereafter, so it will always be the true response of those who fear God. They have to say; "Sir, thou knowest" There are things we know, as we hope, because the Lord has given us a fore-taste, as, the Passion of Christ, His glory and beauty, and the blessings of salvation, peace, joy, the bliss of heaven and heavenly music. There are things we know not but shall know. So John wisely said; "Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation.'

There are three things for me to work out with you this morning, or to begin to. The first is, here are a people, sinners redeemed by blood, and their life here was passing through great tribulation, - everyone of them. This is life for God's people,- great tribulation; but they came out of it. Now you see what a subject this is. They came out of it. Why? Because God loves them; because Christ died for them and is risen. They would never come out if the Lord had remained in the tomb. But Christ is risen, and they rise in Him, with Him, to Him, and through Him. They come out of, and it can be said, in varying degrees while they are here they are delivered in trouble; they are blessed in it, and they come out in a total sense in the finality of it. But this brings me to notice if we are the Lord's people, it does not matter who we are as to our status or position in life, what family we belong to, our life in this world will be great tribulation. It is inevitable. It is the portion the Lord has seen fit we should know here below,- great tribulation. The wonder is that they came out of it.

So before I go further, do you think you are among those in great tribulation? - I shall only as the Lord helps me, touch great tribulation this morning, and hope to revert to it in the evening.

I will just remind you of tribulation: we have recently been treating of it, showing it is a unique form of trouble. You might well say tribulation and trouble are synonymous terms if you really take them strictly in the world. As Christ named it to His disciples it is a unique form of trouble; it is trouble emptied of the curse and filled with the love of God. You will prove it. The sting is extracted and divine love injected. Here it is qualified; great tribulation. In many ways one could look at great tribulation and say it will contribute to bringing you to your grave. It is your tribulation. There is no doubt about it, the preacher is in it, and many of

you, so I will briefly refer to it.

When God quickens your soul to life your tribulation begins. Why? Because you are alive: you have a knowledge of God; of His Being, character, law, and so on. You are not able to say; "Now I understand God's holy, moral law." You know more of God; of self, Of God's character, of your own sinfulness. Immediately you know God you know your own sinfulness, and your tribulation begins. You are a sinner; and this is tribulation. You are tormented, plagued, distressed because you are a sinner, and this is tribulation to you. Clearly, the more the Lord deepens His work, the more you will see your own corruption and your tribulation increases. You know you are a sinner and you are perplexed and anxious. I do not think all Strict Baptists by profession know this tribulation. Are you in this tribulation? Many religious people seem to be destitute of tribulation. Are you in tribulation?

Then the dreadful restlessness of sin! it is terrible. Sin is never still. And the recklessness of sin! It will take any risk, and the risk is even to destroy you and all that is in you. Your body of sin and death is a part of tribulation. You have a holy principle given you, and the standard could not be higher. It is the standard of holiness, - perfect holiness, and you are always aiming at it, and you are in the experience of the terrible power of sin. This is tribulation. You fall, stumble, trip. Foul stains and blots mar everything, and this tribulation. You are never where you should be and where you desire to be: you never reach it. It is tribulation. You write 'failure' over your life. There are besetting sins that have very great power over you to bring you into captivity, and you struggle with them. Although you desire to be rid of them, yet you love them, and you find it seems to be a losing battle. It is tribulation. You fall a thousand times. There are peculiar besetting sins that hold God's children, but you know the conquest of grace if you are the Lord's. The crimes you have committed hang round your neck and like weeds about your head down to old age. This is tribulation. You grieve about what you have done, and Satan takes hold of it, and says; "you know you are not His child. How do you know God has forgiven you?" You are tormented, and it is tribulation. Your body has begun to bow to the ground; you are distressed about what you did years ago.

There is this facet of it: Mr Fawcett has it in his hymn. "My soul, with various tempests tossed," Listen: "Her hopes o'erturned, her projects crossed - hopes o'erturned and projects crossed.

Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end." (289)

Tribulation. Dr Watts has a word. He says;

"Each pleasure has its poison too,
And every sweet a snare." (1064)

and you walk it, and it is tribulation. Your soul is afflicted; your body may be: in your circumstances you are in affliction. It is great tribulation. The mercy is we are in it, and know it so well. We have a bright hope that we shall come out of it. Let us thank God He has taken His dear saints, and they have come out of great tribulation, "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Blessed be God.

Amen.