

Coming and Singing in the Height of Zion

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"Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Jeremiah 31:12

Our text and subject this evening are very closely connected with our text and subject this morning; indeed, so closely connected are they, not only in the sequence of the verses, but also in the sequence of the blessings, that when I went up into the pulpit this morning it was my intention to take both verses and attempt to speak from them. But before I gave out my text, it struck my mind that the subject was so vast and copious that I could scarcely hope to consider it in the course of one sermon as fully as it deserved, and I therefore decided to divide it into two discourses, the result of which is that not only was I enabled to enter more fully this morning into the nature of redemption both by price and by power, but hope to have this evening a clearer and wider field to lay open before you the rich and choice blessings which flow out of redemption as they are folded up in the bosom of our text.

You will perhaps recollect that there was a point on which I touched this morning which I said was, in the language of the apostle, a mystery, and I expressed a wish that I could unfold it more fully, as involving much precious truth. This mystery was, the right of us Gentile believers to claim an interest in the promises made originally to the Jews, and, as

I believe, to be one day both literally and spiritually fulfilled to and in them. If then you will kindly bear with me, I will take the present opportunity to open this point a little more fully and clearly.

The apostle tells us that God by revelation made known to him a mystery, which he calls "the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3, 4.) The word "mystery" in the New Testament does not mean something dark, obscure, and perplexing, but a divine secret, a gracious purpose of God, hidden for a time in his own bosom; and the revealing of a mystery does not signify some mystical communication of a secret intention of God to an individual, of which he alone is the favoured object, but the bringing to open light and the public proclamation of hidden purposes of mercy in God to thousands and tens of thousands. Thus the calling of the Gentiles and putting them into possession of the promises and blessings of the Gospel, was "the mystery" of which Paul speaks as "hidden from ages and generations," that is, the ages and generations which had run their course from the call of Abraham to the time of the coming of Christ; and the revelation of the mystery was the making known "unto the holy apostles and prophets" (that is, the preachers of the gospel under the New Testament) by the Spirit of the purpose of God, that believing Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with believing Jews, be members with them of the same mystical body of Christ, and be equal partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. (Eph. 3:3-6.)

Now connected with and flowing out of this leading mystery, is the peculiar point on which I touched this morning, viz., the right which believing Gentiles possess to appropriate to themselves the promises made to the Jews in the Old Testament, and to give them a spiritual interpretation. This I consider to be a point of very great importance, and yet,

strange to say, it is one very little understood, and as rarely opened or explained. Indeed, you will scarcely find in a hundred ministers one who ever opens it, and among the religious books which are most in our hands any one, to my knowledge, which has even attempted to explain it. They all, whether ministers or books, seem to assume the point as a matter of course, and as one so plain and clear that it is not needful to bestow a word of explanation upon it. But if these promises were given to the literal Israel, as seems to me to be undeniable, should we not be able to establish a clear right to claim them as belonging to us? And unless we can plainly show that we have this clear right, might it not be an act of presumption for us to rest upon them as if they were actually given to us by God himself, and therefore that he will fulfil them spiritually and experimentally to us? I do not say that we have not this right; I believe that we have it. But it is one thing to have a right, and another to know the grounds of it. You may be the lawful owner and rightful possessor of a piece of land but you ought to be able to show your title to it if enquiry be made into your right of possession. Look then simply at this matter as it stands before us. If a man make a will and insert a certain name or names in it as heirs and legatees of all his property, what right has any other person to claim an interest in the provisions and benefits of that will whose name is not put down in it either as an heir or a legatee? Now if you will read the chapter carefully from which my text is taken (Jer. 31), I think you will see very clearly that it is addressed to the literal Israel. Look for instance at the very first verse: "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." Does not the Lord here promise that he will at a certain time be "the God of all the families of Israel?" Now must not this mean the literal Israel, for it says in the preceding chapter "For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of

my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it?" (Jer. 30:3) Does not the Lord declare there that he will cause the literal Israel to return to the land from which they are now banished, which he gave to their fathers, and that they shall possess it? But take another verse: "Again I will build thee and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel." Who is "the virgin of Israel" but the ancient people whom God had separated and espoused unto himself from all the nations of the earth? When we read the historical declaration, "The virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing" (Jer. 18:13), we are ready enough to say, "Ah, that means the Jews of old;" but when we read the prophetic declaration, "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel," though the very words, "Again I will build thee," seem to point, expressly to the repairing of what is ruined and desolate, we say, "No; we must not take the words literally. They do not refer to the literal Israel; they must be taken altogether spiritually." Thus we give to the Jews all the threatenings, and take to ourselves all the promises. Now I don't call this fair.

But look again at a more distinct promise: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." (Jer. 31. 8.) How distinctly does the Lord here promise that he will bring the literal Israel "from the north country and gather it from the coasts of the earth." Where do the Jews now live but in countries north of their own, such as England, Germany, Poland, &c., and are they not scattered in all the coasts of the earth? Is not he who has scattered them able to gather them?

But you will perhaps say, "This is to carnalise the Scriptures. Such prophecies as these must not be explained in that literal manner. They are all spiritual promises, and have nothing to do with the literal Israel; they must all be spiritually and experimentally understood, and to interpret them in that literal way is to rob believers of all the comfort of the promises of the Old Testament." Do you think that I am against the spiritual interpretation of these and similar Old Testament promises? Do you think because I contend that they will one day be fulfilled literally, that I believe that they are not now fulfilled spiritually? If I did not think so, why should I preach from such a text as I have read this evening? I believe in their spiritual interpretation as fully as you do; and if I hold with their literal interpretation, it is not to carnalise them, but to give them a wider, fuller, and even more spiritual interpretation than if I were to limit them to believers under our present dispensation. Let me then explain this point a little more fully.

Israel of old were God's people only by external covenant, and as such typically represented a people with whom God had made a covenant in a much higher, holier, and more glorious way. Whatever privileges, then, such as "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4), which Israel possessed, these external favours could not communicate spiritual life, or make them as a nation partakers of that internal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Circumcision of the flesh could not give circumcision of heart; and their very sacrifices, new moons, and sabbaths, became, through the wickedness of the observers of them, hated of God, and he was weary to bear them. (Isa. 1:14.) We find therefore that the Jewish people abused all their privileges, went greater lengths into open sin than even the heathen by whom they were surrounded, and by their profanity and

wickedness made the name of God blasphemed among the heathen. God never intended therefore that they as a people should be saved with an everlasting salvation, nor be put as a nation into possession of those spiritual blessings allotted to the people of whom they were the typical representatives. These were reserved for the elect of God, for those who were chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began, and were to be made known to them in due time by the power and teaching of the Spirit. But the literal Israel, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, rejected him. They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us: crucify him! crucify him!" "Not this man, but Barabbas." Thus they were justly served in the righteous judgment of God; for as they rejected the Son of God, so God rejected them. The apostle therefore, in Romans 11, as I was quoting this morning, unfolds this subject under the figure of an olive tree. This olive tree, which the apostle calls "a good olive tree," as distinct from the "wild olive tree," which bare no good fruit, represents the literal Israel. Now when the literal Israel rejected the Lord of life and glory, they were for a time cast off. This is represented by breaking off the branches, "because of unbelief." The breaking off then of these natural branches gave an opportunity for the grafting in of Gentile believers, who thereby are made partakers of all the blessings and all the promises which belong to the literal Israel. This is expressed in those striking words, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and then, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree." (Rom. 11:17.) To partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree is to partake of everything that belongs originally to the good olive tree, and therefore of all the promises made to the literal Israel. And as this is a spiritual dispensation, and the literal promises do not belong to us, they still being Israel's portion, we have the peculiar blessing of their spiritual fulfilment and of their experimental interpretation.

This then is the reason why these promises belong to us, and are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. It is because believing Gentiles have succeeded to Israel's place, and because this is a spiritual dispensation, in which we now look not for the fulfilment of temporal but spiritual promises, that I take our text in a spiritual sense, and shall seek this evening to lay before you, in a spiritual and experimental way, the choice blessings promised in it. I shall seek therefore now to direct your thoughts to three leading points which seem contained in it.

I.—*First*, the *place* to which the redeemed come: it is said to be "the height of Zion."

II.—*Secondly*, the *way* by which they are brought.

III.—*Thirdly*, the *blessings* for which they come.

I.—I observed just now that the words of our text were closely connected with our subject this morning. This, you will recollect, was the redemption of Jacob from the hand of him that was stronger than he. This redemption I interpreted spiritually as being the redemption wrought out by the Lord, first by price and then by power. But I may now observe, that I fully believe there will be one day a literal redemption of the literal Israel by power as well as a spiritual redemption of the spiritual Israel by price; and these are not inconsistent with one another, for they only of the literal Israel will be redeemed by power who have been previously redeemed by price.

Now observe the connection of my text with the text and subject this morning. "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." (Jer. 31:11.) "Therefore they shall come and sing

in the height of Zion." The word "therefore" connects redemption with the blessings which flow out of it.

But what is the meaning of coming and singing in the height of Zion? Am I departing from the grand current of God's truth if I express my belief that there will be a literal coming of the literal Israel to the local and natural Zion, as there is now a coming of the spiritual Israel to the spiritual Zion? And am I departing from the oracles of God in thus tracing out two distinct courses of the prophetic word? Have you never seen how two streams sometimes run for a while side by side till they unite in one and form a large and beautiful river? So it is with these two interpretations of the prophetic word. The literal interpretation which belongs to the literal Israel, as yet unfulfilled, flows side by side with the spiritual interpretation which belongs to the spiritual Israel now fulfilled daily, until both streams will more fully unite in times to come, when there will be in Christ a complete fulfilment of every prophecy and of every promise. The prophecies and promises of God's word are so vast that they cannot and should not be tied and limited to one mode of fulfilment only. But some now seem to be much of the same spirit with the Jews of old. They could not bear the thought that the Gentiles should have any share in the promised blessings of the Old Testament. When, therefore, Paul, making his defence before the Jewish people, told them the words which the Lord had spoken to him, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," they were so inflamed with wrath that he should preach salvation to the Gentiles that though they gave him audience unto this word, then they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." (Acts 22:21, 22.) So now if one drop a word about the future restoration of the Jews to their own land and to a place in God's favour, some are almost ready to say, "Away with such a doctrine; it is not fit that any one should

hold it who stands in a pulpit as a living, experimental man of God."

But I was to show you *the place* to which the redeemed come. It is called in our text "the height of Zion." What then is the meaning of Zion, and why is it called "the height of Zion?" Zion has two significations: one local and literal, and the other spiritual and experimental. The two are intimately connected because the spiritual meaning is always based upon the literal.

Let us look first then at the *literal* and local meaning. Zion means literally "a sunny place," "a sunny mountain"—a spot therefore which basks in all the light and heat of the glorious sun. The literal Zion was, you will recollect, a steep, precipitous cliff in Jerusalem, so strong by nature and so fortified by art that the Benjamites who occupied the lower part of the city could never drive out the Jebusites who were the ancient possessors of that stronghold: "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." (Joshua 15:63.) But David, we read, attacked this fortress, which was so strong that the Jebusites tauntingly sent him word, "except thou take away the blind and the lame," that is the blind and lame soldiers whom out of mockery they had set to defend the walls, "thou shalt not come in hither." But David through Joab, who was made for that exploit his chief captain, took it by force, and upon that spot thus won by the sword and thence called the city of David he afterwards built his palace. Mount Zion, then, was not the place on which the temple stood, as it is often explained. The temple stood on Mount Moriah, which was separated from Mount Zion by a very deep valley, and which faced the east as Mount Zion faced the south. As then the spiritual signification of a type is

always based upon the literal, Mount Zion does not typify the temple, nor the things connected with the temple, but it represents the city of David in which was the royal palace which he built for his own residence. There he took up his royal abode; there he dwelt in regal majesty; thence he issued his laws; and there he displayed himself as king over Israel and Judah. It is very desirable to have clear views upon this point, for otherwise we shall miss the meaning of the figure. Zion, therefore, spiritually understood, does not represent Christ crucified, but Christ glorified; not Christ on the cross, but Christ at the right hand of God; Christ as King, not Christ as priest; Christ as Lord and Head of the Church, not Christ as shedding his blood to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. If Zion had represented the temple, it would have represented the sacrifices of the temple, and would have been a type of Christ in his humiliation. But representing the royal city of David, it becomes a New Testament emblem of the present exaltation of Christ dwelling in regal majesty at the right hand of God. Paul therefore says: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12:22, 23.) Observe how Mount Zion stands in connection with the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Are not all these glorious accompaniments of a risen and exalted Christ?

For this reason, therefore, we may view Zion as typical of the gospel and the blessings of the gospel, as Mount Sinai was typical of the law and the curses of the law. And it is so because it is the proclamation of mercy and peace, of grace

and truth, which the enthroned King sends forth by his servants from the seat of his glory. The blessed Lord having accomplished the whole work of redemption, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, having redeemed Jacob by the price of his own blood, having been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and now being risen from the dead, gone up on high, and at God's right hand in all the power of regal majesty, sends forth his word out of Zion in a precious gospel, as a proclamation of mercy; and his servants go forth as messengers of peace to proclaim the battle fought, the victory won, salvation accomplished, Christ risen, and at the right hand of the Father as King in Zion and Prince of peace.

Now till the redeemed know something of the efficacy of atoning blood and have their consciences purged from guilt and filth by its application, they cannot come and sing in the height of Zion. But when they are redeemed from the hand of him who is stronger than they; when atoning blood is applied to their consciences to purge away guilt and filth; when Christ is revealed and made experimentally known; when his gospel in the hands of the Spirit becomes a word of power, and a view of the King in his beauty is granted to the believing heart, then, drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man, they come to Zion where the King sits enthroned in glory. It is called "the height of Zion" not only because Zion was high literally, but because the Lord of life and glory is exalted to the highest place of dignity and power. God's ancient promise was, "Behold, my servant shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high" (Isa. 52:13); and the apostle says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9); and again "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph.

1:21.) But why do they come? It is to commune with him, to worship him in the beauty of holiness, to get words from his lips, smiles from his face, touches from his hand, and whispers from his lips. And when he is graciously pleased to speak a word to them as Prince of peace, to reveal himself to their souls in the glory of his divine Person as God-Man, and to shed abroad his love in their hearts, then they can sing, and in them is the promise fulfilled, "they shall come and sing in the height of Zion."

II.—But let me now show *how* they come, *how* they are brought; but to do this I must take you back a few verses. If you will refer to verse 9 of this chapter you will find it written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." I believe for my part that there will be a literal fulfilment of these words when the Lord brings again the captivity of Jacob, and has mercy upon the whole house of Israel (Ezek. 39:25); but I will not dwell upon this point, as I have already spoken so much upon it, but explain them as fulfilled spiritually in the experience of those who are brought by the power of God's grace to come and sing in the height of Zion.

1. The first thing said of them is, "They shall come *with weeping*." Wherever God begins a gracious work in the soul, he takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh. Repentance, true repentance, is the first step in the divine life. "Repent and be converted," was the word preached by Peter to the Jews, "that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19.) "Repentance and remission of sins," according to the Lord's command, was to be preached "in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47.) And Paul's

ministry was "to testify both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." True religion, then, begins with a sorrowful heart and weeping eyes. Wherever there is a spiritual conviction of sin, there will be penitential grief and godly sorrow on account of it; and it is by this godly sorrow, this brokenness of heart, this contrition of spirit, this penitential grief, that the true convictions wrought by the blessed Spirit are distinguished from those mere natural convictions under which the heart is as hard as adamant and as full of rebellion as Satan himself. It is in this broken heart—broken up with the plough of convictions, that the seed of the word takes root; and the deeper, for the most part, the convictions, and the more pungent the grief and sorrow for sin, the deeper root will the word of grace strike into the soul.

2. The next mark is, "With *supplications* will I lead them." Wherever the blessed Spirit convinces the soul truly of sin, he gives a spirit of prayer and supplication. This is another distinctive mark of a true work of grace. "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications" was the ancient promise (Zech. 12:10); and this is being continually fulfilled in the experience of every quickened soul. A spirit of prayer in a broken heart is a sure mark of the grace of God. A prayerless heart is a godless heart; and a prayerful heart is a gracious heart. Weeping and supplications go hand in hand and help and strengthen each other; for the same grace which makes us feel our need of mercy enables us to sue for mercy. Prayer without a soft and broken heart is but the prayer of a Pharisee; convictions without prayer are but the repentance of a Judas.

But observe how the whole of their path from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion is marked with weeping and supplications. Every

step of the way, so to speak, they water with their tears, and along the whole road they travel with supplications. Not that they are always weeping, not that they are always praying. I do not mean that; but as the Lord works in them by his Spirit and grace, they come with weeping, and with supplications does he lead them. As Hart says:

"Not for an hour, a day, or week
Do saints repentance own;
But all the time the Lord they seek
At sin they grieve and groan."

Nothing is so bitter, nothing so grieves, nothing is such a trouble to the child of God, as sin; and glad is he, though it is in some sense a sorrowful gladness, when he can truly weep on account of his sins and mourn over them with godly sorrow. When then together with this broken heart and weeping eyes there is mingled the spirit of prayer and supplication, then the two work together. A broken heart works with and helps a praying spirit; and a praying spirit works with and helps a broken heart.

3. The third mark is, that the Lord causes them "to *walk by the rivers of waters* in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble." I think we may understand these rivers of waters as spiritually signifying those continual supplies of grace and life whereby the soul is kept alive unto God; for the communications of divine life to the soul are continually spoken of in Scripture under the figure of water, and of water as springing up or flowing. Thus our Lord speaks of the water that he gives as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," and promises that "he that believeth on him, out of his belly, or heart, shall flow rivers of living water." John in vision saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Ezekiel too had a wondrous sight of a river that took its rise on the right side of the house at the south side of the altar. (Ezek. 47:1.) These testimonies show clearly that flowing water represents the communications of life and grace to the soul. Thus these weeping penitents are led by the rivers of water to intimate the continual supplies of the life and grace of God; and as pilgrims that travel by a river side are continually watered and refreshed by the stream, so the communications of God's grace maintain the life of God in their soul. As then they walk by the rivers of waters they are continually refreshed by that river which maketh glad the city of God.

4. And this is the reason why they walk "in a *straight way*, wherein they shall not stumble." All the paths of the flesh are paths of crookedness and deceit. But this way, the way of God's leading and bringing, is a straight way; and being upheld by the power of God, they neither stumble nor fall, but walk securely on till they reach Mount Zion.

5. But the Holy Ghost in our text points out also another way whereby they are brought and made to come and sing in the height of Zion: "And shall *flow together*."

By this is meant not merely a large assemblage of ransomed people all going forward to the same point, and flowing like a mighty river to Zion as standing before their eyes. This may be and probably is its literal meaning, and will be fulfilled when those whom the Lord will lead by the rivers of water will move Zionward with one heart and one soul; but I shall give it a deeper, more spiritual, and experimental meaning as fulfilled in the hearts and affections of the living family of God. It will thus describe the flowing together of their hearts and affections Zionwards; the melting of their souls into all the mingled softness and strength of a running stream; the

union which they have with the truth of God, and with their fellow travellers who, like themselves, come with weeping and are led with supplications. We shall by and by see how they flow together to the goodness of the Lord, and how a sense of his goodness having led them to repentance, they move Zionward with a holy freedom of soul; for they have been made willing in the day of God's power. The Lord has manifested himself to their souls; they have tasted that he is gracious, and have felt a sense of his goodness in their heart. Views and glimpses of the King in his beauty, as he sits enthroned in Zion, put forth a drawing efficacy, as we read in a preceding verse: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) It is these drawings of everlasting love; these discoveries of the suitability, blessedness, grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus which have a wondrous efficacy in drawing up to himself the tenderest feeling of their soul. His grace makes their heart flow down into meekness, humility, and brokenness; it softens their obdurate spirit, and makes every hard and obstinate feeling melt away and disappear, like the flowing down of ice and snow under the beams of a warm sun. When this is the case, every grace of the Spirit flows in sweet union with this broken, meekened, humbled, and softened spirit; and thus there is a flowing forth of faith to embrace the Son of God; a flowing forth of hope to anchor within the veil; a flowing forth of love to his dear name, and a flowing forth of godly sorrow for having so grievously sinned against him. And as every grace of the blessed Spirit unites with the rest in sweet harmony, there is a flowing together of the whole inward man to one point and to one object—to Zion, and to Zion's enthroned King. All enmity, prejudice, dislike, all strife and contention, all pride and self-righteousness, all carnality and worldly-mindedness, and everything which is opposed to the life and power of God sink

out of sight, buried as it were in the waves of the flowing stream.

Even literally and locally we see this promise fulfilled. Have not many of you this evening flowed together to one spot with one object—to see once more the King in his beauty, to hear once more the words of his grace? Though some of you perhaps have come rather sighing than singing, rather sorrowing than rejoicing, rather lamenting your state as sinners than glorying in a full and free salvation, yet still those that sigh and those that sing can flow together. All are setting their face Zionward; those that sigh in hopes that they may sing; those that sing in hopes that they may sing in higher strains, and from a renewed sight of the King in his beauty, sound more loudly his worthy praise. Thus you all whose hearts God has touched flow together. If you come with weeping and are being led with supplications, your faces are set Zionwards; and if enabled to sing, your song is still one of the songs of Zion, for thither you are bending your way with your mourning brethren. In this way the goodness of the Lord attracts every gracious heart, and to enjoy a sense of this goodness makes them move with willing feet in the way that leads to Zion.

III.—I have now to show you *the blessings* which they come to obtain.

All spiritual blessings may be said to be laid up in Mount Zion, according to that testimony of the apostle that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. 1:3.)

i. I have already pointed out that Zion represents the royal seat of our exalted King. He is sitting in regal majesty in heavenly places; and as God has blessed his people with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly places, they are stored up in Christ as King in Zion. Now the Lord graciously inspires his believing people with a taste for these spiritual blessings, a longing heart for them, a spiritual appetite which can feed upon them, and an earnest desire to be put into living possession of them. Some of the choicest of these spiritual blessings are mentioned in our text.

1. The first mentioned is "*wheat*." By this we must understand not wheat simply in its pure, natural state, for wheat unground is not human food, but that which is made of wheat, viz., bread; and spiritually interpreted we may understand it as representing the bread of life of which the Lord spake so graciously (John 6) when he called himself "the bread of life," and declared that he was "the living bread which came down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof and not die." Having, then, a keen appetite—for they are brought out of captivity where they were half starved; out of the prison cell, where their food was scanty and their water measured;—they come to Zion to feed upon the bread which God has stored up there. Christ himself in his Person, work, blood, and righteousness is indeed chiefly the bread for which they come; but we may also say that every sweet promise, every holy truth, every gracious invitation, every comforting declaration in the word of truth, and everything that savours of a risen Christ and gives them some taste of the sweetness and blessedness which are in him, is to them some of the finest of the wheat as springing out of and connected with him who is the bread of life. Happy soul is that which only living bread can satisfy, and which, under the teachings and drawings of the blessed Spirit, comes to Zion with weeping and supplications that it may feed upon living bread and thus live for ever.

2. They come also for *wine*. They want a cordial. Their hearts

are often faint within them, their spirits drooping, and they want something that can strengthen their sinking soul, and cheer and encourage their weary mind. There is a wondrous wine of which we read that it "cheereth God and man." (Judges 9:13.) This cannot be wine literally, for the juice of the grape cannot cheer the heart of God; but when we view it in a spiritual sense as representing the atoning blood of the Son of God, we then see the beauty of the expression. For was not the obedience of his dear Son even to death most pleasing and grateful to his heavenly Father? To get, then, a sip of this gospel wine—the wine of the kingdom, the good old wine that is laid up in Zion as a cordial for the poor thirsty ones who are pining for something to relieve their fainting spirit, do the redeemed come to Zion; for the Lord has there laid up not only bread to satisfy their appetite, but wine to satisfy their thirst. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart," was the wise counsel of the mother of Lemuel to her royal son. (Prov. 31:6.) So the Lord has stored up in Zion strong drink for him that is ready to perish—the strong drink of eternal truth, and the wine of gospel grace to cheer those that be of heavy heart. What are you who are ready to faint and are of heavy heart come here for this evening? Is it not to get some of this good old wine? And if the Lord be pleased to drop a sweet promise into your soul, to apply his word with power to your heart, it will be a sip and a taste of the wine of the kingdom which he has stored up in Zion.

3. They come also for *oil*, which in eastern countries is almost a necessary of life. We find therefore corn, wine, and oil put together in the Scriptures as special blessings given of God for bodily health and sustenance. "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." (Psalm 104:15.) Our bodies are so constituted that nature cannot be

sustained without some food of a fatty kind, which we have in this climate in the shape of butter or the fat of meat. But butter can hardly be made in hot climates, and fat meat cannot be eaten without injury. God therefore has given the olive tree in rich abundance in those warm climes, that oil may supply the place of that fat food which is necessary for the human system, and which either cannot be obtained or is not consistent with health in those countries. Oil too is necessary in those hot, dry climates as an external application to supple the skin, remove the effects of dust and heat, and render the body healthy and comely. Thus taken internally oil serves for food, and applied externally for health, comfort, and comeliness.

But of course it has a spiritual meaning; and thus oil viewed spiritually is the unction of God's grace, the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, which not only feeds the soul as oil the body, but also supples and softens the heart and conscience, adorns and beautifies the inward man, and sanctifies the soul for the indwelling of God. This oil of heavenly grace is stored up in Zion; for a risen and glorified Christ has received gifts for the rebellious and sends down the Holy Ghost to testify of himself. Thus the redeemed come to Zion to get this oil. The servants of God want this oil when they preach, and the people of God want this oil when they hear. It is the unction of God's grace, the savour of his Spirit, the power of his presence, and the anointing which teacheth all things and is truth and no lie attending the word, which make the gospel so precious when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

4. They come also for the *young of the flock*. By this we may understand the Lamb of God; for what is the young of the flock but the lamb? and what is the lamb spiritually viewed but "the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world"—the

Lamb of God of which the Paschal lamb was a type and figure? Thus holy John saw "a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne." Although, then, Jesus is King of Zion, he is still the Lamb; and thus John heard millions of voices all saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," &c. They come therefore to the height of Zion to be fed with the flesh of the Lamb, to have a view by faith of the Lamb of God bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, that they may join in that song of praise, "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

5. But they come also for the *young of the herd*. This I interpret also of Christ; for as the young of the flock, being the lamb, was significant of the Lamb of God, so the young of the herd seems to signify the calf; and was not the fatted calf that was killed for the prodigal son, and on which they feasted merrily, significant of Christ? We might also refer to the sacrifice of a young bullock under the law as intimated by the expression "the young of the herd;" for we know that under the law sacrifices were taken both from the flock and from the herd; and that these sacrifices, whether it was that of a lamb or that of a bullock, equally pointed to the great sacrifice of Christ.

We thus see that all those blessings for which the redeemed come to Zion are typical of Christ. Is it wheat? It points to Christ. Is it wine? It points to Christ. Is it oil? It points to Christ. Is it the young of the flock—the lamb? It points to Christ. Is it the young of the herd—the calf or the bullock? It points to Christ. He is all in all, represented indeed under those various figures, and yet all insufficient to set forth his fulness and his beauty.

I have not time to enter more fully into these points, but you will see how the redeemed all come to the height of Zion, that they may feed upon the provisions that God has blessed Zion with. Nor do they come in vain. When they are enabled to come to the height of Zion, they find in rich profusion every blessing that their soul is in quest of; as we read: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Psalm 132:13, 14, 15.) Do they want the bread of life? There it is to be found. Do they want the wine of the kingdom? There it is to be had. Do they want the oil, the unction of God's grace? There it is stored in rich profusion. Do they want to feed upon the flesh of the Lamb? There the Lamb is enthroned in Zion. Or to partake of the fatted calf? There it is reserved for the prodigal who comes to his Father's house to receive a welcome in his embrace.

ii. And what is the effect? That their soul becomes as "*a watered garden.*" In Eastern climes a garden cannot exist without water, and soon becomes a parched desert. It needs continual irrigation from some river or stream even to obtain ordinary produce. Damascus, for instance, is celebrated for its gardens; but the reason is because the river Barrady, and other streams descending from the mountains, furnish the city and the plain with a constant supply of water, which is distributed into numerous canals, which irrigate the fields and gardens and clothe them with perpetual verdure. A watered garden therefore is a scriptural figure to represent a soul watered by the flowing in of God's goodness, love, and mercy. And as a garden dries up and becomes unfruitful without water, so it is with the souls of the redeemed. They need to be watered continually by the river of God's grace, to make them fruitful in every good word or work. How continually we feel parched up and dried; and how unable at

such seasons we are to bring forth any fruit unto God. This makes us long for these streams, for the rivers of water in a dry land: for every grace of the Spirit seems to languish and droop without them.

But these waters flow from and are only to be had at Mount Zion. Mount Sinai yields none. That is literally a barren spot, for travellers tell us it is one of the most dry and desolate places on the earth; and it is spiritually more barren and dry than it is naturally. The law gives no wheat, wine, or oil; the law provides no young of the flock or of the herd. The world gives none of these things; sin gives none of these things. Nor can nature in its best and fairest shape yield one of these divine products. God has stored them up in Zion, and to Zion he brings all his redeemed, that they may there eat, drink, and be full. And as they come and sing in the heights of Zion, the Lord of the house, the Master of the banquet, says to them, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. All is cost free. Here is bread for the hungry; here is wine for the fainting; here is oil for the sickly; here is the lamb for the **[missing word?]** sprinkled with blood; and here is the fatted calf for the returning prodigal; and all without money and without price. Come and buy; come and eat. It is all free, for "in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isaiah 25:6.)

Thus the redeemed, when they are brought out from the hand of him that is stronger than they, delivered from the curse of the law, snatched from the power of sin, rescued from the hand of Satan, made conquerors over death and hell, freed from their foes and saved from their fears, come, drawn by the blessed Spirit, to the height of Zion, and there they find all these provisions laid up for them, with a full table, a flowing cup, a kind Entertainer, and a cheerful

welcome.

iii. Now this whilst it lasts puts an end to their sorrows, for our text declares, "And they shall not sorrow any more at all." Why indeed need they, when they get these rich mercies, and are put into possession of these heavenly blessings? But how their previous path has prepared them for these enjoyments and employments! What a benefit they have gained from groaning under the law, from having been tortured by sin, tempted by Satan, hated by the world, shot at by foes, and encompassed with fears! What lessons they have learnt in this salutary school! They have learnt their need of a Redeemer, of the ransoming blood of the Lord of life and glory; and they have learnt what he can do for the soul which he has redeemed by his blood; what his wisdom can contrive, his power perform, his love accomplish, and his grace be sufficient for. Thus there is no coming and singing in the height of Zion, there to feast upon the wheat, and wine, and oil, on the young of the flock and the herd, and for the soul to be like a watered garden, except by passing through the various things which I described this morning: knowing experimentally something of the curse of the law, the power of sin, the strength of Satan, the opposition of the world, the fear of death, the dread of hell, and the enmity of many foes; yet getting through atoning blood, and redeeming power, a deliverance from them; and as getting a deliverance from them, coming to him who has redeemed them, and is now risen from the dead, and sits enthroned in glory as Zion's King, and spreads the banquet for his redeemed, that they may come and sing in the height of Zion, and feed upon gospel delicacies.

This is God's way and we cannot reverse it. We might think and say foolishly, "What need of the prison house, of the bondage of the law, of the power of sin, the fear of death,

the terrors of hell, the many fears? Could not all this be escaped? Why not come at once to the height of Zion, and there sing and rejoice, without all this preparatory work? Why not come and partake at once of the 'wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd?'" Why, we should not be prepared for those gospel delicacies. We should go to the feast in all our rags of self-righteousness, with all our legality and pharisaism, the love of sin in our breast, and the power of lust in our carnal mind; we should go in presumption, in arrogance, in vain confidence; not with broken hearts, contrite spirits, and weeping eyes; not as humble penitents saved by sovereign grace; not as poor prisoners redeemed by blood and power. We should go presumptuously, arrogantly, daringly, as thousands do. But knowing experimentally what we are, what we have been, and what we are redeemed from, it produces humility, caution, circumspectness, tenderness, brokenness, and contrition, and prepares us for the gospel feast by giving us gospel grace. But all the redeemed, redeemed by price, and redeemed by power, will come and sing in the height of Zion; they will all have a new song put into their mouth; they will all be feasted with the wheat, and the oil, and wine, and the young of the flock and of the herd: their souls will be as a watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more.

There may be in this congregation many a poor prisoner under the law, under the power of sin, held in bonds of temptation, tempted by Satan, hated by the world, environed by foes, and encompassed by fears. Fear not: the Lord hath redeemed thee; he will bring thee out; he will manifest his power; he hath bought thee with his blood, and will save thee by his grace, and thou wilt come and sing in the height of Zion. And when thou comest thou wilt find wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, all prepared for thee, and thou wilt feast and be full, and bless

the Lord of the house for the provisions he has stored, for the kindness of the invitation, and for the welcome he gives the guest.

O the mercy of redeeming love and atoning grace! O the blessedness of there being a King on Mount Zion, a high Priest over the house of God, an Intercessor that can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.