

History of the Work of Redemption

Jonathan Edwards



HISTORY OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

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Jonathan Edwards



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A sweeping theological masterpiece tracing **God's plan of redemption** across the entire arc of human history. Originally delivered as a series of sermons on Isaiah 51:8, this work divides salvation history into three grand periods — from the Fall to Christ's incarnation, through His earthly ministry, and onward to the **final consummation**. Edwards reveals how every event in Scripture and providence serves one **unified divine purpose**: the rescue and restoration of God's people. A foundational text of **Reformed theology** and one of the earliest attempts at a comprehensive biblical theology of history.



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TITLE PAGE



A History of the Work of Redemption.
Containing the outlines of a body of divinity, presented
in an entirely new method.

By the late Reverend Jonathan Edwards, President of the
College of New Jersey.

Edinburgh printed; Boston: Reprinted by Draper and Folsom,
near the Market.

1782.

PREFACE



The friends of Jonathan Edwards have long desired that a number of his manuscripts be published. But two obstacles stood in the way. First, all posthumous publications carry an inherent disadvantage, and this made me question for a considerable time — after these manuscripts came into my hands — whether I could in good conscience allow any of them to appear in public, given the honor owed to so worthy a father. Second, printing any substantial work in this young country has proved difficult. Being uncertain of my own judgment and wondering whether I was being overly cautious, I decided to seek the counsel of gentlemen who are friends both to the character of Jonathan Edwards and to the cause of truth. They advised that the works be published.

The second obstacle was removed by a gentleman in the Church of Scotland, who had formerly corresponded with Jonathan Edwards. He arranged for a bookseller to undertake the printing and expressed his desire that these discourses be made public.

Jonathan Edwards had planned a body of divinity presented in a new method and in the form of a history. He intended first to show how the most remarkable events of all ages — from the fall to his own time, drawn from both sacred and secular history — were designed to advance the work of redemption. He then planned to trace, by the light of scriptural prophecy, how that same work would be carried forward to the end of the world. His heart was so set on executing this plan that he was considerably reluctant to accept the presidency of Princeton College, fearing that the duties of that office would prevent him from completing it.

The outlines of that work are now offered to the public, contained in a series of sermons preached at Northampton in 1739, with no thought of publication. For that reason, the reader should not expect from them everything he might reasonably have expected had they been written with publication in mind and prepared by the author's own hand for the press.

As for elegance of style — now considered so essential in all published works — it is well known that the author did not make that his chief concern. Yet his other writings, though lacking the ornaments of polished language, possess that solid merit which has earned both them and him a considerable reputation in the world, and high esteem among many. It is hoped that the reader will find in these discourses much plain good sense, sound reasoning, thorough knowledge of Scripture, and genuine piety. Since the plan is new and many of the ideas are uncommon, these sermons may entertain and benefit the thoughtful, curious, and devout reader. They may strengthen faith in God's governance of the world, in the Christian religion as a whole, and in many of its dis-

tinctive doctrines. They may also help readers study the historical and prophetic books of Scripture with greater pleasure and profit, and inspire them to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

That this volume may produce these happy effects in all who read it is the sincere desire and prayer of

The reader's most humble servant, Jonathan Edwards. New Haven, February 25, 1773.

ADVERTISEMENT



Those who love the study of Scripture and have the opportunity to read these pages will, I am confident, feel greatly indebted to the Reverend Jonathan Edwards of New Haven for consenting to publish them. Though the keen philosopher and deep theologian are evident throughout, these pages are generally better suited for the instruction and growth of ordinary Christians than those writings of President Edwards where abstract subjects or the subtle objections of opponents led him into more technical and philosophical reasoning. The manuscript was entrusted to my care, and I have not presumed to alter any of the ideas or the composition. I have, however, taken the liberty of converting it from the form of sermons — which it originally bore — into a continuous treatise, and I have varied the markers for the various divisions and subdivisions so that each category of headings can be easily distinguished.

Edinburgh, April 29, 1774. John Erskine.

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A HISTORY OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION



Isaiah 51:8. "For the moth will eat them like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation to all generations."

The purpose of this chapter is to comfort the church in her suffering and under the persecution of her enemies. The argument for comfort is the constancy and permanence of God's mercy and faithfulness toward her. This faithfulness will be shown in His continuing to work salvation on her behalf, protecting her against every assault of her enemies, carrying her safely through all the changes of the world, and finally crowning her with victory and deliverance.

In this text, the blessedness of the church of God is set forth by contrasting it with the opposite fate of her enemies who oppress her. We can observe two things here.

1. How short-lived the power and prosperity of the church's enemies are. "The moth will eat them like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool" — that is, however great their prosperity and however glorious their present state, they will gradually waste away and vanish under a secret curse of God until they come to

nothing. All their power, glory, and persecution will permanently cease, and they will be finally and irrecoverably ruined, just as the finest and most glorious clothing will in time wear out and be consumed by moths and rot. We learn who these people are from the preceding verse — namely, the enemies of God's people: "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, a people in whose heart is My law; do not fear the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings."

2. The contrasting happy portion of God's church, expressed in the words, "My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation to all generations." Who these are that receive this blessing we also learn from the preceding verse — those who know righteousness and the people in whose heart is God's law — in short, the church of God. Concerning the blessedness spoken of here, we can observe two things: first, what it consists of, and second, how long it continues.

(1) What this blessedness consists of — namely, God's righteousness and salvation toward His people. By God's righteousness here is meant His faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant promises to His church — His faithfulness in bestowing on His people and church the benefits of the covenant of grace. These benefits are given by free and sovereign grace, being entirely undeserved. Yet because God has been pleased to bind Himself to bestow them through the promises of the covenant of grace, they are given in the exercise of God's righteousness. Therefore the apostle says in Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name." And in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So the

word righteousness is very often used in Scripture for God's covenant faithfulness, as in Nehemiah 9:8: "You have carried out Your words, for You are righteous." Righteousness and covenant mercy are often used for the same thing, as in Psalm 24:5: "He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Psalm 36:10: "Continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart." And Psalm 51:14: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness." Daniel 9:16: "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away." This pattern appears in countless other passages as well.

The other word used here is salvation. Of these two — God's righteousness and His salvation — one is the cause and the other is the effect. God's righteousness, or covenant mercy, is the root, and His salvation is the fruit. Both relate to the covenant of grace. One is God's covenant mercy and faithfulness; the other refers to the work of God by which that covenant mercy is realized in its fruits. Salvation is the sum of all God's works by which the benefits of the covenant of grace are secured and bestowed.

(2) We can observe its continuance, expressed here by two phrases: "forever" and "from generation to generation." The latter phrase seems to explain the former. The word forever is used in various ways in Scripture. Sometimes it means as long as a person lives — as when a servant who has had his ear pierced to his master's door is said to serve him "forever." Sometimes it refers to the duration of the Jewish state, as when many ceremonial and Levitical laws are said to be statutes "forever." Sometimes it means as long as the world stands, to the end of the generations of

mankind. So Ecclesiastes 1:4 says, "A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever." Sometimes it means throughout all eternity. Romans 1:25 speaks of God being "blessed forever." And John 6:51 says, "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." The following words determine which meaning applies here — namely, to the end of the world, to the end of the generations of mankind, as expressed in the next phrase: "and My salvation to all generations." The fruits of God's salvation will remain beyond the end of the world, as Isaiah 51:6 makes clear: "Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not wane." Yet the work of salvation itself toward the church will continue to be carried out until the end of the world. Until then, God will go on accomplishing deliverance and salvation for the church from all her enemies — for that is what the prophet is describing. He will do this until the end of the world, until her enemies lose all power to trouble the church. The phrase "from generation to generation" helps establish the timeframe in which God continues to carry on this work of salvation for His church — both its beginning and its end. It is from generation to generation, spanning all generations, beginning with the first generations of men on earth and not ending until those generations end at the close of the world. From these words we draw this doctrine:

Doctrine. The work of redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world.

The generations of mankind on earth did not begin until after the fall. The beginning of the descendants of our first parents came after the fall, for all their descendants by natural generation are partakers of the fall and of the corruption of nature that followed from it. These generations, by which the human race continues, will last until the end of the world. So the fall of man marks the beginning, and the end of the world — the day of judgment — marks the end. These same boundaries define the work of redemption as it concerns God's progressive works by which that redemption is brought about and accomplished, though not as it concerns the fruits of redemption — for those, as noted above, will continue for all eternity.

The work of redemption and the work of salvation are the same thing. What Scripture sometimes calls God's saving His people, it elsewhere calls His redeeming them. So Christ is called both the Savior and the Redeemer of His people.

Before entering on the proposed History of the Work of Redemption, I will do two things.

1. Explain the terms used in the doctrine, and,
2. Show what things are designed to be accomplished by this great work of God.

First, I will show how the terms of the doctrine are to be understood. Specifically, 1. how I use the word redemption, and 2. how I mean it when I say this work is a work of God carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world.

1. Here is how I use the word redemption. It should be noted that the work of redemption is sometimes understood in a narrower sense, referring only to the purchase of salvation — for the

word strictly means a purchase of deliverance. Taken in this restricted sense, the work of redemption did not take a long time. It began and was completed during Christ's humiliation. It was accomplished entirely while Christ was on earth. It began with Christ's incarnation, continued through His life, and was finished with His death — or rather, with the period He remained under the power of death, which ended in His resurrection. So we say that the day of Christ's resurrection is the day He finished the work of redemption. That is, the purchase was then completed, and the work itself with everything belonging to it was virtually done and finished — though not yet actually applied.

But sometimes the work of redemption is taken in a broader sense, including everything God works or accomplishes toward this end — not only the purchasing of redemption, but also all God's works that were properly preparatory to the purchase, as well as the applying of the purchase and accomplishing its success. In this broader sense, the entire plan — including the preparation, the purchase, and the application and success of Christ's redemption — is what I call the work of redemption. This includes everything Christ does as mediator in any of His offices — whether prophet, priest, or king; whether He acted in this world in His human nature, or before or since. It also includes everything the Father and the Holy Spirit have done as united in this design of redeeming sinful men. In a word, it is everything accomplished in the execution of the eternal covenant of redemption. I call this one unified work of redemption, for it is all one work — one design. The various acts and works that belong to it are simply the several parts of one plan. It is one design toward which all the offices of Christ directly tend, in which all three persons of the Trinity coop-

erate, and to which all the various works belonging to it are joined — like many wheels in one machine, serving one purpose and producing one result.

2. When I say this work is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world, there are two or three things I would ask the reader to keep in mind.

1. I do not mean that nothing was done toward redemption before the fall of man. Many things were done toward this work before the fall. Some things were done before the world was created — indeed, from all eternity. The persons of the Trinity were, so to speak, united in a design and covenant of redemption. In that covenant, the Father had appointed the Son, the Son had undertaken the work, and everything to be accomplished was stipulated and agreed upon. Beyond this, things were also done at the creation of the world — before man fell — in preparation for that work, for the world itself appears to have been created in order to it. The work of creation was aimed at God's works of providence. So if one asks which is greater — God's works of creation or His works of providence — the answer is His works of providence, because they are the purpose for which creation exists, just as a house is built for its use or a machine is made to be operated. And God's chief work of providence is this great work described in the doctrine, as will become more fully clear in what follows.

Heaven itself was created in preparation for the work of redemption — it was to be the dwelling place of the redeemed. Matthew 25:34 says, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Even the angels were created to serve in this work. The apostle therefore calls them

"ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). As for this lower world, it was undoubtedly created as the stage on which this great and wonderful work of redemption would be carried out. And so, as could be shown in many respects, this world was wisely shaped at its formation for the condition of mankind since the fall — living under the possibility of redemption. So when I say the work of redemption is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world, I do not mean that everything ever done in preparation for redemption has taken place since the fall. Nor,

2. I do not mean that there will be no remaining fruits of this work after the end of the world. In fact, the greatest fruits of all will come after that. The glory and blessedness that is the sum of all the fruits will remain with all the saints forever. The work of redemption is not an eternal work in the sense of being always in progress and never completed. But the fruits of this work are eternal fruits. The work has an end. When that end comes, the goal will be reached — and that goal will never itself come to an end. Just as the things that prepared for this work before the beginning of the world — such as God's electing love and the covenant of redemption — had no beginning, so the fruits of this work that follow the end of the world will have no end. Therefore,

3. When the doctrine says this is a work God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world, what I mean is that everything belonging to this work — all the parts of this plan — is being accomplished throughout that entire span. Some things that are preparatory to it come before it begins, and some fruits of it come after it is finished. But the work itself is long in the doing — spanning from the fall of man to the end of the world — and it is being

carried on throughout. It began immediately after the fall and will continue to the end of the world, when it will be finished. The various works of God during this period all belong to the same work and the same design, and they all have one outcome. They are therefore to be regarded as the several parts of one work — like the successive movements of one machine that together bring about one great final result.

Here we must also distinguish between the parts of redemption itself and the parts of the work by which that redemption is accomplished. There is a difference between the parts of the benefits that are secured and bestowed, and the parts of the work of God by which those benefits were secured and bestowed. For example, there is a difference between the parts of the benefit the children of Israel received — their redemption out of Egypt — and the parts of the work of God by which that redemption was accomplished. The redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt, considered as the benefit they enjoyed, consisted of two parts: their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and misery, and their being brought into a more blessed state as servants of God and heirs of Canaan. But there are far more things that belong to the work of God called His work of redeeming Israel out of Egypt. To that work belong His calling of Moses, His sending him to Pharaoh, all the signs and wonders He performed in Egypt, His bringing terrible judgments on the Egyptians, and many other things.

It is this work by which God brings about redemption that we are discussing. This work is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world, and it is so in two respects.

(1) With respect to the effect worked in the souls of the redeemed, which is common to all ages from the fall of man to the end of the world. This effect refers to the application of redemption to the souls of individual people — their conversion, justification, sanctification, and glorification. Through these things the souls of individual people are actually redeemed and receive the benefit of the work of redemption in its effect in their souls. In this sense the work of redemption is carried on in every age of the world, from the fall of man to the end of the world. God's work of converting souls — opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, raising dead souls to life, and rescuing captive souls from Satan's grip — began soon after the fall, has been carried on in the world ever since, and will continue to the end of the world. God has always, ever since He first established the church of the redeemed after the fall, maintained such a church in the world. Though it has often been reduced to a very small remnant and humble circumstances, it has never completely failed.

As God carries on the work of converting the souls of fallen men throughout all these ages, He also goes on to justify them — blotting out all their sins and accepting them as righteous in His sight through the righteousness of Christ, and adopting them from being children of Satan to be His own children. He likewise goes on to sanctify them, carrying forward the work of grace He has begun in them, comforting them with the consolations of His Spirit, and glorifying them — bestowing on them, when their bodies die, the eternal glory that is the fruit of Christ's purchase. Romans 8:30 says, "And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these

whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." This applies to every age from the fall to the end of the world.

The way the work of redemption — with respect to its effects on the souls of the redeemed — is carried on from the fall to the end of the world is by repeating and continually working the same work again and again in different individuals, from age to age. But,

(2) The work of redemption, with respect to the overall design as it concerns the whole and its ultimate end, is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world in a different manner — not merely by repeating the same effect in different individuals, but by many successive works and acts of God, all aimed at one great end, all united as the parts of a single plan, and all together constituting one great work. This is like a building under construction: first the workers are sent out, then the materials are gathered, then the ground is prepared, then the foundation is laid, then the structure is raised one part at a time, until at last the capstone is set in place and everything is finished. The work of redemption, in the broad sense described above, can be compared to such a building — one being constructed from the fall of man to the end of the world. God began it immediately after the fall of man. Some things were done toward it right away, as will be shown later, and God has been proceeding ever since — gathering materials and building, so to speak — and will continue until the end of the world. Then the time will come when the capstone is laid and the whole structure stands complete. The glorious structure will then stand in its full and perfect form.

In the first respect mentioned above — namely, the effect on the souls of the individual people who are redeemed — this work proceeds by accomplishing an effect that is common to all ages. In the second respect — namely, as it concerns the church of God and the overall design — the work is carried on not only by what is common to all ages, but by successive works accomplished in different ages, each a part of one whole, one great plan being brought about by various steps, one step in one age and another in another. It is this progressive carrying on of the work of redemption that I will focus on most, though not to the exclusion of the former, since the two necessarily depend on each other.

Having explained what I mean by the terms of the doctrine, so that you may more clearly see how the great design and work of redemption is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world, I now proceed to the second point.

I will now show what the design of this great work is — what things it is meant to accomplish. To see how a design is carried out, we must first understand what the design is. To follow a workman's progress and understand the various steps he takes to complete a piece of work, we need to know what he is building — otherwise we could stand and watch him do one thing after another and be completely puzzled, seeing no plan and understanding nothing of his intention. If a great architect with many workers were building a palace, and a stranger who knew nothing of such things stood watching — seeing some men digging, others bringing timber, others cutting stone, and so on — he would see much activity but without knowing the design, it would all look like chaos. So that the great works and acts of God belonging to this great work of redemption will not appear like confusion to you, I will briefly

set before you the main things this great work is designed to accomplish. God began working toward these things immediately after the fall of man and will continue working until the end of the world, when the whole work will stand complete. The main things it is designed to accomplish are as follows.

1. It is designed to put all God's enemies under His feet, so that the goodness of God would finally appear triumphing over all evil. Soon after the world was created, evil entered through the fall of the angels and of man. Almost immediately after God had made rational creatures, enemies rose up against Him from among them. Then in the fall of man, evil entered this lower world and God's enemies rose up against Him here. Satan rose up against God, working to frustrate His design in creating this lower world, to destroy His handiwork here, to wrest the governance of this world from His hands, and to set himself up as its god in place of the God who made it. To accomplish this, Satan introduced sin into the world. Having made man God's enemy, he brought guilt upon man and brought death and the most extreme and dreadful misery into the world.

Now one great purpose of God in the work of redemption was to overcome and subdue these enemies of God until all of them would be put under God's feet. 1 Corinthians 15:25 says, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." From the very beginning, things were planned so that God would disappoint, confound, and triumph over Satan, and Satan would be bruised under Christ's feet. Genesis 3:15 records the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. It was part of God's original design in this work to destroy the works of the devil and bring all his purposes to nothing. 1 John 3:8 says, "The

Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." It was part of His design to triumph over sin and the corruption of men, and to root it out of the hearts of His people by conforming them to Himself. He also designed that His grace would triumph over man's guilt and over the infinite evil that is in sin. Furthermore, it was part of His design to triumph over death — which, though it is the last enemy to be destroyed, will finally be conquered and abolished.

God appearing gloriously above all evil and triumphing over all His enemies was one great purpose God intended through the work of redemption. God began the work by which this was to be accomplished as soon as man fell, and He will continue it until He brings it to complete fulfillment at the end of the world.

2. In doing this, God's design was to perfectly restore all the damage of the fall, as far as it concerns the elect, through His Son. This is why we read of "the restoration of all things" in Acts 3:21: "Whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." And of "times of refreshing" from the presence of the Lord Jesus in Acts 3:19: "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Man's soul was ruined by the fall — the image of God was destroyed, man's nature was corrupted, and man became dead in sin. God's design was to restore the soul of man — to bring it back to life and restore the image of God through conversion, to carry on that restoration in sanctification, and to perfect it in glory. Man's body was ruined too; by the fall it became subject to death. God's design was to restore it from that ruin — not only to deliver it from

death in the resurrection, but to deliver it from mortality itself by making it like Christ's glorious body. The world was ruined, as far as man was concerned, as thoroughly as if it had been reduced to chaos again; all of heaven and earth were overthrown. But God's design was to restore all of it — to create, as it were, a new heaven and a new earth. Isaiah 65:17 says, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind." 2 Peter 3:13 says, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

The work by which this was to be accomplished began immediately after the fall and continues until all is finished at the end, when the whole world — heaven and earth — will be restored. There will be, in a spiritual sense, new heavens and a new earth at the end of the world. Revelation 21:1 describes it this way: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away."

3. Another great purpose of God in the work of redemption was to gather all things together in Christ — in heaven and on earth — that is, all elect creatures. He designed to bring all elect creatures, in heaven and on earth, into union with one another in one body under one head, and to unite that whole body to God the Father. This work began soon after the fall, is carried on through all ages of the world, and will be completed at the end of the world.

4. God designed by this work to perfect and complete the glory of all the elect through Christ. It was God's design to raise the elect to an extraordinary level of glory — "what no eye has seen, and no ear has heard, and what has not entered the heart of man." He intended to bring them to perfect excellence and beauty in His image

and in holiness, which is the proper beauty of spiritual beings. He planned to raise them to a glorious degree of honor, and also to an unspeakable height of pleasure and joy. In this way He would glorify the entire church of elect men in soul and body, and together with them bring the glory of the elect angels to its highest point — all under one head. The work moving toward this end began immediately after the fall, continues through all ages, and will be perfected at the end of the world.

5. In all of this, God designed to bring about the glory of the blessed Trinity to a surpassing degree. God had a design from eternity to glorify Himself — to glorify each person of the Godhead. The end must be understood as first in the order of design, and then the means. So we should understand God as having set this end, and then choosing the means to achieve it. The chief means He chose was this great work of redemption we are discussing. It was His design in this work to glorify His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and it was His design that through the Son the Father would be glorified. John 13:31-32 says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." It was His design that the Son would be glorified, and would glorify the Father through what the Spirit accomplished, to the glory of the Spirit — so that the whole Trinity together, and each person individually, would be supremely glorified. The work appointed as the means of this began immediately after the fall and continues until, and is completed at, the end of the world — when all this intended glory will be fully achieved in all things.

Having explained the terms used in the doctrine and shown what things this great work of God is designed to accomplish, I now turn to the proposed History — that is, to showing how the purposes of the work of redemption have been carried out through its various steps, from the fall of man to the end of the world.

To do this, I will divide this entire span of time into three periods:

First, reaching from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ;

Second, from Christ's incarnation to His resurrection — the entire time of Christ's humiliation;

Third, from Christ's resurrection to the end of the world.

Some may think this a very uneven division — and it is, in an important respect. The second period is by far the greatest. Although it is much shorter than either of the others — spanning only thirty to forty years, while the others span thousands — in terms of this work of redemption, it surpasses both of the others combined. I will therefore proceed to show distinctly how the work of redemption is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world through each of these periods in order, which I will cover under three propositions, one for each period.

1. From the fall of man until the incarnation of Christ, God was doing things that were preparatory to Christ's coming and to the working out of redemption — things that were forerunners and pledges of it.

2. The time from Christ's incarnation to His resurrection was spent in securing and purchasing redemption.

3. The entire period from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world is taken up with bringing about and accomplishing the great effect and success of that purchase.

By examining these three propositions in detail, the great truth taught in the doctrine may become clear, and we may see how the work of redemption is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world.

The End.

PERIOD 1. FROM THE FALL TO THE INCARNATION



My first task is to show how the work of redemption is carried on from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ, under the first proposition.

The entire period from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ was spent doing things that were forerunners and pledges of Christ's coming and of the working out of redemption — things that were preparatory to it.

All the great works of God in the world during this entire period were preparatory to this. There were many great changes and upheavals in the world, and they were all simply the turning of the wheels of providence toward one goal: making way for the coming of Christ and for what He was to accomplish in the world. They all pointed toward Him, and they all found their fulfillment in Him. This was especially true of all God's great works toward His church. The church passed through many different seasons of providence and very different circumstances before Christ came. But all those seasons were designed to prepare the way for His coming. God saved souls throughout that entire period, though the number was very small compared to what it would later be. All this

salvation was, so to speak, given in advance. All the souls saved before Christ came were only, as it were, a foretaste of the great harvest to come.

God worked many smaller salvations and deliverances for His church and people before Christ came. These salvations were all so many images and forerunners of the great salvation Christ would accomplish when He arrived. God revealed Himself repeatedly from the fall of man to the coming of Christ. The church during that time enjoyed the light of divine revelation — God's word. They had, to some degree, the light of the Gospel. But all these revelations were only forerunners and pledges of the great light that He would bring who came as the light of the world. That entire period was like nighttime — the church of God was not entirely without light, but it was like the light of the moon and stars at night: a dim light compared to the sun, mingled with a great deal of darkness. As 2 Corinthians 3:10 says, it had no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. The church had the light of the sun, but only as it was reflected from the moon and stars. Throughout that time the church was in its minority — still a child. The apostle makes this clear in Galatians 4:1-3: "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father." "So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."

For greater clarity, I will subdivide this period from the fall of man to the coming of Christ into six smaller periods. The first extends from the fall to the flood; the second from there to the call-

ing of Abraham; the third from there to Moses; the fourth from there to David; the fifth from David to the captivity in Babylon; and the sixth from there to the incarnation of Christ.

PART 1. FROM THE FALL TO THE FLOOD



This was the period furthest of all from Christ's incarnation, yet this great work was begun during this time. This glorious building, which will not be finished until the end of the world, had its start here — and I will now show how.

1. The moment man fell, Christ entered upon His mediatorial work. This was when Christ first took on the work and office of mediator. He had committed to it before the world was made. He had bound Himself to the Father from all eternity to appear as man's mediator and to take on that office when the time came. Now that time had arrived. When man fell, the occasion came — and Christ immediately, without further delay, entered upon His work and took on the office He had pledged to take from eternity. The moment man fell, Christ the eternal Son of God clothed Himself with the mediatorial role and in that capacity presented Himself before the Father. He stepped immediately between a holy, infinitely offended Majesty and offending mankind, and His intervention was accepted. So wrath was prevented from going forth in the full execution of that terrible curse man had brought upon himself.

It is clear that Christ began to exercise the office of mediator between God and man the moment man fell, because mercy was extended toward man immediately. There was mercy in God's restraint — He did not destroy man as He did the angels when they fell. But no mercy is shown toward fallen man except through a mediator. If God had not in mercy restrained Satan, Satan would have immediately seized his prey. Christ began to act as intercessor for man the moment he fell. No mercy is shown toward man except what is obtained through Christ's intercession. So from that point forward, Christ had entered upon the work He would continue throughout all the ages of the world. From that day forward, Christ took on the care of the church of the elect — the care of fallen mankind in the exercise of all His offices. He undertook to teach mankind through His prophetic office, to intercede for fallen man through His priestly office, and to take on the burden and care of governing the church and the world of mankind from that day forward. He took upon Himself from that time the defense of His elect church against all their enemies. When Satan, the great enemy, had conquered and overthrown man, the task of defeating and overcoming Satan was committed to Christ. From then on He undertook to manage that subtle, powerful adversary. He was appointed the Captain of the Lord's hosts and the Captain of their salvation, and He has always acted as such from that time forward — appearing from time to time and continuing to act as such until the end of the world. From that point, this lower world with all its concerns was, so to speak, entrusted to the Son of God. For when man sinned, God the Father would have no more direct dealings with man — no more immediate involvement with this world of mankind that had turned against and rebelled against Him. From

then on He would have no dealings with man except through a mediator — whether in teaching men, governing them, or bestowing any benefits upon them.

Therefore, when we read in sacred history what God did from time to time toward His church and people — what He said to them, and how He revealed Himself to them — we should understand this as referring especially to the second person of the Trinity. When we read of God appearing after the fall, from time to time, in some visible form or outward symbol of His presence, we should ordinarily — if not always — understand this as referring especially to the second person of the Trinity. This is supported by John 1:18: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." Christ is therefore called "the image of the invisible God" in Colossians 1:15 — indicating that though God the Father is invisible, Christ is His image and representation through whom He is seen, and through whom the church of God has often received a visible representation of Him. In particular, this points to the fact that Christ afterward appeared in human form.

Not only was this lower world entrusted to Christ for Him to govern and order in keeping with His design of redemption — but in some respect the entire universe was placed under Him. From that time, the angels were committed to Him, to be subject to Him in His mediatorial office and to serve as ministering spirits to Him in this work. And so they did from that point forward, as Scripture history clearly shows — recording again and again their activity as ministering spirits in the affairs of the church of Christ.

We may therefore suppose that immediately upon the fall of man, it was made known in heaven among the angels that God had a design of redemption for fallen man, and that Christ had now taken upon Himself the office and work of mediator between God and man — so that they might know their role going forward, which was to serve Christ in this office. Since that time, Christ in this office — as God-man and Mediator — has been solemnly exalted and established as King of heaven, and as God-man and Mediator He is the light, the Sun of heaven, in keeping with Revelation 21:23: "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." The revelation made in heaven among the angels — that Christ had now taken on the office of mediator between God and man — was, as it were, the first dawning of this light in heaven. When Christ ascended into heaven after His suffering and was solemnly enthroned as King of heaven, then this sun rose in heaven — the Lamb who is the light of the new Jerusalem. But the light began to dawn immediately after the fall.

2. Shortly after this, the Gospel was first revealed on earth in these words from Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel." We should expect that God's intention to redeem fallen man was first communicated in heaven before it was communicated on earth, because the role of the angels as ministering spirits of the Mediator required it. As soon as Christ had taken on the work of mediator, the angels needed to be ready immediately to serve Him in that office. So the light first dawned in heaven — but very soon after, the same was made known on earth. In those words of God

there was a hint of another guarantor to be appointed for man, now that the first had failed. This was the first revelation of the covenant of grace — the first dawning of the light of the Gospel on earth.

Before the fall, this lower world enjoyed the full light of noon — the light of the knowledge of God, the light of His glory, and the light of His favor. But when man fell, all this light was instantly extinguished and the world plunged back into total darkness — a worse darkness than the one at the beginning of the world described in Genesis 1:2: "The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep." This darkness was a thousand times more hopeless than that. Neither man nor angels could find any way to scatter it. This darkness showed its full depth when Adam and his wife saw that they were naked and sewed fig leaves together, when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden and hid themselves among the trees, and when God called them to account and said to Adam, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" At that moment we may suppose their hearts were filled with shame and terror. But the words of God in Genesis 3:15 were the first dawning of the light of the Gospel after this darkness. Here for the first time appeared some faint glimmer of light after this terrible darkness — a darkness that before this moment had no glimpse of light, no ray of comfort, and not the slightest trace of hope. It was an obscure revelation of the Gospel, given not directly to Adam or Eve but spoken in what God said to the serpent. Yet it was remarkably comprehensive, as could easily be shown, were there more time for it.

Here was a certain promise of a merciful plan through "the seed of the woman" — like the first faint light of the sun on the eastern horizon when day begins to break. This hint of mercy was given to Adam and Eve even before sentence was pronounced on either of them, out of God's tenderness toward those to whom He purposed to show mercy. He did not want them crushed by a sentence of condemnation with nothing before them from which they could draw any hope.

One of the great purposes designed to be accomplished by the work of redemption is more plainly indicated here than the rest — namely, God's subduing His enemies under the feet of His Son. This was announced here, and God's intention to do it was first declared at this point. This was the very work Christ had now undertaken — which He began shortly afterward, has carried on ever since, and will perfectly accomplish at the end of the world. Satan had likely rejoiced greatly over the fall of man, as if he had defeated God's design in creating man and the world. But in these words, God gave him a clear warning that he would not finally triumph — that a complete victory would be won over him by the seed of the woman.

This revelation of the Gospel in this verse was the first act of Christ in His prophetic office. Recall the first of the three propositions — that from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ, God was doing things preparatory to Christ's coming and the working out of redemption, things that were forerunners and pledges of it. One of those things God did in this time before Christ's coming into the world was to foretell and promise it, repeatedly, from age to age, until Christ came. This was the first promise ever given of it — the first prediction ever made of it on earth.

3. Soon after this, the practice of sacrifice was appointed to serve as a lasting picture of Christ's sacrifice until He would come and offer Himself up to God. Sacrifice was not a custom first established by Moses's Levitical law — it had been part of God's appointed worship long before, from the very beginning of God's visible church on earth. We read of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offering sacrifice, and before them Noah, and before him Abel. This was by divine appointment, for it was part of God's worship in His church, offered in faith and accepted by Him — which proves it was by His institution, since sacrifice is not part of natural worship. Natural reason does not teach men to offer animals as sacrifices to God, and since it was not commanded by the law of nature, if God accepted it, there must have been some positive command or institution behind it. God has declared His abhorrence of worship invented by human tradition without His institution, as Isaiah 29:13 says: "Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote; therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people,' " etc. Such worship as has no foundation in divine institution cannot be offered in faith, because faith has no basis where there is no divine appointment. It cannot be offered in faith of God's acceptance, since people have no grounds to hope for God's acceptance of what He has not appointed and to which He has not promised His acceptance. It follows, therefore, that the practice of offering sacrifices to God was instituted soon after the fall — for Scripture tells us that Abel offered "the firstlings of his flock and of their fat" (Genesis 4:4), and that God accepted his offering (Hebrews 11:4). Nothing in the

account suggests that the institution was first given when Abel offered that sacrifice — on the contrary, it appears that Abel was simply following a practice already established.

It is very likely that sacrifice was instituted immediately after God revealed the covenant of grace in Genesis 3:15 — for that covenant and promise was the foundation on which the practice of sacrifice was built. That promise was the first stone laid in this glorious building — the work of redemption — which will be completed at the end of the world. The next stone laid upon it was the institution of sacrifices, to serve as a type of the great sacrifice.

The next thing recorded after God pronounced sentence on the serpent, the woman, and the man was that God made garments of skins and clothed them. Most theologians believe these were the skins of animals slain in sacrifice, since there is no other recorded reason for man to have slaughtered animals at this point — nothing indicates men ate the flesh of animals as food until after the flood. Before the fall, man's food in paradise was the fruit of the trees. After being expelled from paradise, his food was the plants of the field. Genesis 3:18 records God telling Adam, "You will eat the plants of the field." The first permission to eat animal flesh as common food came after the flood. Genesis 9:3 says, "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant." So it is likely that the skins Adam and Eve were clothed with were the skins of their sacrificed animals. God clothing them with these skins was a vivid picture of their being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. This clothing was nothing they obtained for themselves — it was God who gave it to them. Scripture says, "God made garments of skin for them, and clothed

them" — just as the righteousness our naked souls are clothed with is not our own righteousness but the righteousness that comes from God. He alone clothes the naked soul.

Our first parents were naked, and they were clothed at the cost of life — animals were killed and gave up their lives as a sacrifice to God in order to provide covering for them. So Christ does the same to provide covering for our naked souls. A skin represents life, as Job 2:4 shows: "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life" — that is, life for life. So our first parents were covered with the skins of sacrifices, just as the tabernacle in the wilderness — which signified the church — was covered with rams' skins dyed red, as though dipped in blood, to signify that Christ's righteousness was worked out through the agony of death, in which He shed His precious blood.

We noted earlier that the light the church enjoyed from the fall of man until Christ's coming was like the light we have at night — not the direct light of the sun, but light reflected from the moon and stars, which foretold the Sun of Righteousness who would later rise. This coming light of the Sun of Righteousness was given to them chiefly in two ways: through prophecies foretelling and promising Christ's coming, and through types and shadows prefiguring His coming and redemption. The first thing done to prepare the way for Christ through prophecy was the promise just discussed; and the first thing done through types to foreshadow Christ's coming was the institution of sacrifices we are now examining. Just as the promise in Genesis 3:15 was the first dawn of Gospel light after the fall in the form of prophecy, so the institution of sacrifices was the first hint of it through types. The giving of that promise was the first act after the fall in this work through Christ's

prophetic office; the institution of sacrifices was the first act after the fall through which Christ chiefly displayed Himself in His priestly office.

The institution of sacrifice was a major step in preparing the way for Christ's coming and for the working out of redemption. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were the most central of all the Old Testament types of Christ and His redemption. They established in the minds of God's visible church the necessity of a propitiatory sacrifice for God to be satisfied for sin, and so prepared the way for the reception of the glorious Gospel, which reveals the great sacrifice — not only in the visible church, but throughout the whole world. From this institution of sacrifice after the fall, all nations derived the practice of offering sacrifices. The custom of offering sacrifices to the gods to make atonement for sin was common to all peoples. No nation, however uncivilized, was found to be without it. This is strong evidence for the truth of the Christian religion — for no nation except the Jews could explain where this custom came from or what purpose it served to offer sacrifices to their gods. Natural reason did not teach them to do this. It did not teach them that the gods were hungry and fed on the flesh burned in sacrifice — yet they all had this practice. The only explanation is that they inherited it from Noah, who received it from his ancestors, upon whom God had commanded it as a picture of the great sacrifice of Christ. Through this means, all the nations of the world had their minds shaped by the idea that an atonement or sacrifice for sin was necessary — and a way was prepared for them to more readily receive the great Gospel doctrine that teaches the atonement and sacrifice of Christ.

4. Soon after the fall, God actually began saving the souls of men through Christ's redemption. In this, Christ — who had recently taken on the work of Mediator between God and man — first began that work in which He acted in His kingly office. Just as He was represented in His priestly office through the sacrifices, and had appeared in His prophetic office in the first prediction of redemption, so now He appeared in His kingly office. In that prediction, the light of Christ's redemption first began to dawn in prophecy. In the institution of sacrifices, it first began to dawn in types. And now, in actually beginning to save men, it first began to dawn in its fruit.

It is probable, therefore, that Adam and Eve were the first fruits of Christ's redemption — probable from the way God dealt with them, comforting them after their distress and terror. They were awakened and ashamed by their guilt after the fall, when their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked and sewed fig leaves to cover themselves — just as a sinner under first convictions typically tries to cover the nakedness of his soul by patching together a righteousness of his own. Then they were further terrified and awakened by hearing the voice of God as He came to pronounce judgment on them. Their fig-leaf coverings were not enough; despite them, they ran and hid among the trees of the garden, because they were naked and did not dare trust their fig leaves to hide their nakedness from God. Then they were further awakened as God called them to strict account. But while their terror was at its height — while they stood, as we may suppose, trembling and horrified before their judge, with nothing to hold on to and no grounds for hope — God took care to hold out some encouragement to them, to prevent the crushing effects of despair, by

giving a hint of a merciful plan through a Savior, even before He pronounced sentence against them. When He then proceeded to pronounce sentence — which likely raised their terror still higher — God soon afterward showed His care for them, and let them see He had not completely abandoned them. He provided for them in their fallen, naked, and miserable condition by making garments of skins and clothing them. This also showed His acceptance of the sacrifices they had offered to Him for sin — the skins being types of what God had promised when He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" — a promise they gave good reason to believe they trusted and embraced. Eve seems to plainly express her hope in and dependence on that promise in what she says at the birth of Cain in Genesis 4:1: "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" — meaning, as God promised that my seed would bruise the serpent's head, so now God has given me this pledge and sign of it, a seed born to me. She plainly acknowledged that this child was from God, and hoped that the promised seed would come through her firstborn son — though she was mistaken, as Abraham was regarding Ishmael, as Jacob was regarding Esau, and as Samuel was regarding the firstborn of Jesse. Her words at the birth of Seth especially express her hope and dependence on God's promise. Genesis 4:25 records, "For God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."

So it is very probable — if not clear — that just as Christ took on the work of mediator the moment man fell, He also immediately began the work of redemption in its effect, immediately confronting His great enemy the devil, whom He had undertaken to conquer, and rescuing those two first captives from his hands. This foiled Satan shortly after his triumph over them, in which he had

made them his captives. Though Satan seemed, as it were, certain of them and all their descendants, Christ the Redeemer quickly showed him he was wrong — that He was able to overcome Satan and deliver fallen man. He demonstrated this by delivering those first captives, and in doing so gave an early fulfillment of the warning, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" — a foretaste of one of the great things He had undertaken: the subduing of all His enemies under His feet.

After this we have another instance of redemption in one of their children — righteous Abel, as Scripture calls him — whose soul was perhaps the first ever to enter heaven through Christ's redemption. In him we have at least the first recorded instance in Scripture of the death of a redeemed person. If he was indeed the first, then just as Christ's redemption had begun to dawn earlier in the souls of men through their conversion and justification, in Abel it first began to dawn through glorification. Through him the angels first performed their role as ministering spirits to Christ, going forth to escort the souls of the redeemed to glory. In Abel, the elect angels in heaven had their first opportunity to see something so remarkable as the soul of one from the fallen race of mankind — a race plunged by the fall into an abyss of sin and misery — brought to heaven and enjoying heavenly glory. This was a far greater thing than if they had seen him restored to the earthly paradise. Through this they witnessed the glorious effect of Christ's redemption — the great honor and happiness secured for sinful, miserable creatures by it.

5. The next remarkable thing God did to further this great work of redemption — worth noting here — was the first remarkable outpouring of the Spirit through Christ that ever occurred, which

happened in the days of Enos. This seems to have been the next significant step in constructing this glorious building that God had begun and laid the foundation of in Christ the Mediator. Genesis 4:26 records, "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." The meaning of these words has been considerably debated among theologians. We cannot suppose the meaning is that this was the first time man ever prayed. Prayer is a duty of natural religion and the most natural expression of a spirit of piety. Prayer is, as it were, the very breath of a devout spirit — and we cannot suppose that the godly men who had lived for more than a hundred years before this had gone all that time without any prayer. Some theologians therefore think the meaning is that this was when men first began to perform public worship, or to call upon the name of the Lord in public gatherings. Whether or not that is the right interpretation, at minimum this must be understood: something new had appeared in the visible church of God with respect to prayer — a great increase in the practice of calling on the name of the Lord, carried far beyond what it had ever been before. This must have been the result of a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God.

If this was when men were first stirred to come together in gatherings to seek God and help one another in ways they never had before, it points to something extraordinary as the cause — nothing less than unusual influences of God's Spirit. We see from experience that a remarkable outpouring of God's Spirit is always accompanied by a great increase in prayer. When the Spirit of God begins a work in people's hearts, it immediately moves them to call on the name of the Lord. It was so with Paul after the Spirit of God laid hold of him — the next report was, "Behold, he is praying!" And so it has been in every remarkable outpouring of the Spirit

recorded in Scripture, and so it is foretold it will be in the great outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days. Zechariah 12:10 foretells that it will be poured out as a spirit of grace and prayer. Zephaniah 3:9 says, "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder."

When it says, "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord," the most that can be meant is that this was the first remarkable season of this kind that ever occurred. It was the beginning — the first — of such a work of God, such an outpouring of His Spirit. Scripture often uses similar expressions in this way. 1 Samuel 14:35 says, "Saul built an altar to the Lord; it was the first altar that he built to the Lord" — in the Hebrew, as the margin shows, "that altar he began to build to the Lord." Hebrews 2:3 says, "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us."

It is worth noting here that from the fall of man to this present day, the work of redemption in its effect has been carried on chiefly through remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God. Though there is a more constant, ongoing influence of God's Spirit always accompanying His ordinances to some degree, the greatest advances in this work have always come through remarkable outpourings of the Spirit at special seasons of mercy — as will become fully apparent as we continue through this subject. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of Enos was the first remarkable outpouring of God's Spirit that ever occurred. There had been a saving work of God in the hearts of some individuals before this time, but now God was pleased to grant a larger outpouring of His Spirit, bringing in a harvest of souls to Christ. In this we see that great

building — the subject of our present discussion, which God began to lay the foundation of immediately after the fall of man — carried further and built higher than it had ever been before.

6. The next thing worth noting is the extraordinarily holy life of Enoch, who we have good reason to believe was a saint of greater eminence than any who had come before him. In this respect, the work of redemption was carried to a higher point than it had ever reached. We just observed how the work was advanced in the visible church generally during the days of Enos. Enoch was probably one of the saints gathered in that harvest, since all his days on earth fell within the days of Enos. But in terms of how far this work was carried in the soul of a particular individual, it reached a greater height in Enoch than in anyone before. His soul, built upon Christ, was built up in holiness to a greater degree than any previous example. He was a remarkable demonstration of Christ's redemption and the power of His grace.

7. In Enoch's time, God revealed the coming of Christ more explicitly than He had done before, through the prophecy of Enoch recorded in Jude 14-15: "It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'" Here Enoch prophesies of the coming of Christ. The prophecy does not appear to be limited to any single coming of Christ, but speaks generally of Christ's coming in His kingdom. It finds partial fulfillment in both the first and second coming of Christ, and indeed in every remarkable display Christ has made of Himself in the world

— for the saving of His people and the destruction of His enemies. This prophecy is very similar in this respect to many other Old Testament prophecies of Christ's coming in His kingdom, and in particular it closely parallels the great prophecy of Christ's coming in His kingdom in Daniel 7, from which the Jews primarily drew their concept of the kingdom of heaven. Daniel 7:10 says, "A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:13-14 says, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." Though Enoch may well have had in view more immediately the approaching destruction of the world by the flood — which was a striking picture of Christ's destruction of all His enemies at His second coming — this prophecy undoubtedly looked beyond the type to the fulfillment.

This prophecy of Christ's coming is more explicit than anything that had come before it. It represents an increase in that Gospel light that began to dawn shortly after the fall of man, and is another instance of that building — the subject of our present discussion — being carried further and built higher than before.

By the way, I would note that the increase of Gospel light and the carrying on of the work of redemption — as it concerns the elect church in general, from the founding of the church to the end

of the world — follows much the same pattern as the carrying on of the same work and the same light in an individual soul, from conversion until it is perfected and crowned in glory. The work in a particular soul has its ups and downs: sometimes the light shines brighter, sometimes it is a dark time; sometimes grace seems to prevail, at other times it seems to languish for a long while and corruption gains ground, and then grace revives again. But in general, grace is growing. From its first implanting until it is perfected in glory, the kingdom of Christ is being built up in the soul.

The same is true of the great work in general, as it relates to the whole scope of it — carried on from its beginning after the fall until it is perfected at the end of the world. This will become more fully apparent through a particular examination of this work from beginning to end, as we continue through this subject, if God provides the opportunity to carry it through as I intend.

8. The next remarkable event in the carrying on of this work, as recorded in Scripture, is the translation of Enoch into heaven. The account is in Genesis 5:24: "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Here Moses, in giving the genealogy of those in Noah's line, does not say of Enoch, as he says of the others, that he lived so long and then died. Instead he writes, "he was not, for God took him" — that is, God translated him, carrying him in body and soul to heaven without dying, as Hebrews 11:5 explains: "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death." Through this remarkable work of God, the work of redemption was advanced to a greater height in several respects than it had ever been before.

Recall that when I was showing what great things God aimed at in the work of redemption — the main things He intended to accomplish — I mentioned the perfect restoring of the ruins of the fall for the elect, including restoring man from the destruction he had brought on himself, in both soul and body. Now this translation of Enoch was the first instance ever of restoring the ruins of the fall with respect to the body. There had been many instances of the soul being restored through Christ's redemption, but none of the body actually being redeemed and saved until this point. All the bodies of the elect are to be saved along with their souls. At the end of the world, all the bodies of the saints will actually be redeemed — those who had died, by resurrection; and those still living at that time, by a glorious transformation. A number of the bodies of saints were raised and glorified at the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and before that there was the instance of Elijah's body being glorified. But the first instance of all was this one — Enoch.

The work of redemption was advanced further by this than it had ever been before. Through this remarkable work of God, there was a great increase of Gospel light to the church of God — the church now had a clearer revelation of a future state and of the glorious reward awaiting the saints in heaven. 2 Timothy 1:10 says that "life and immortality" are "brought to light through the gospel." The more of this is brought to light, the more clearly the light shines in this respect. What was said in the Old Testament about a future state is very obscure compared to the fuller, plainer, and more abundant revelation given in the New. Yet even in those early days, the church of God was favored with a visible demonstration of it — one of their own brothers was actually taken up to

heaven without dying. We have every reason to believe the church knew of this at the time, just as they later knew of Elijah's translation. And as this was a clearer demonstration of a future state than the church had previously received, so it was a pledge and foretaste of the future glorification of all the saints that God intended through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

9. The next thing to observe is how God sustained the church in the family from which Christ was to come, during the great and widespread apostasy that preceded the flood. The church of God was in all probability small compared to the rest of the world from the time mankind first began to multiply on the earth — that is, from the time of Cain's rebellion and his departure from among God's people, as recorded in Genesis 4:16: "Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden" — Nod meaning the land of wandering. From the time of Cain's departure and separation from the church of God, it is likely the church was small compared to the rest of the world. The church appears to have been maintained chiefly through the descendants of Seth, for he was the seed God appointed to replace Abel, whom Cain had killed. But we cannot reasonably suppose that Seth's descendants made up even a fiftieth of the world's population. Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. Cain, who appears to have led those outside the church, was Adam's eldest child, likely born soon after the fall — which itself was probably shortly after Adam's creation. This means Cain had time to have many sons before Seth was born. Beyond that, Adam and Eve almost certainly had many other children before Seth, in keeping with God's blessing to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And many of those children could themselves have had children.

The account of Cain before Seth's birth suggests large numbers of people already existed on the earth. Genesis 4:14-15 records Cain saying, "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." And the Lord responded, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. All those already living when Seth was born would have had equal capacity to multiply their own descendants. So, as I said, Seth's posterity was only a small fraction of the world's inhabitants.

But after the days of Enos and Enoch — for Enoch was translated before Enos died — the church of God greatly declined. Multitudes who were descended from Seth and had been born within the church fell away and joined the wicked world, chiefly through intermarriage with them. Genesis 6:1-2 and 4 records: "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose." "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." By "sons of God" here is certainly meant the children of the church — a title frequently given to them in Scripture. They intermarried with the wicked world, and their hearts were led away from God. There was a great and growing departure from the church. The church of God, which had served as a restraint on the wicked world, shrank dramatically, and wickedness surged forward with-

out restraint. Satan — that old serpent the devil who had deceived our first parents and set himself up as god of this world — raged with great force. Every thought of man's heart was only evil continually, and the earth was filled with violence. The world seemed flooded with wickedness now, as it would later be flooded with water. Mankind in general was drowning in this flood — nearly all were swept away by it. Satan now made his most violent and powerful attempt to swallow up the church of God, and came very close to succeeding. But God preserved it through all this flood of wickedness and violence. He kept it alive in the line from which Christ was to come. He would not allow it to be destroyed, for a blessing was within it. The Lord the Redeemer was rooted in this branch of mankind and was afterward to come from it. There was a particular family that was the root from which the great Redeemer of the world would spring and from which the branch of righteousness would one day shoot forth. Therefore, however many branches were cut off and however much the tree appeared to be destroyed, God in the midst of all this kept the root alive by His wonderful redeeming power and grace — so that the gates of hell could not prevail against it.

So I have shown how God carried on the great work of redemption — how the building progressed that God began after the fall, during this first period of Old Testament history: from the fall of man to the flood. It is worth noting that although Moses's account of God's great works during this period is very brief, it is remarkably comprehensive and instructive. It is also profitable to observe here the power of that purchase of redemption that had such great

effects even in the ancient world — so many ages before Christ Himself appeared to accomplish redemption — showing that His blood had such great power long before it was shed.

PART 2. FROM THE FLOOD TO THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM



I now turn to show how the same work was carried on through the second period of the Old Testament — from the beginning of the flood to the calling of Abraham. For though that mighty, overwhelming universal deluge overthrew the world, it did not overthrow this building of God — the work of redemption. Rather, the work continued to advance, and instead of being overthrown, it kept being built up and carried further in preparation for the great Savior's coming into the world and the working out of redemption for His people. Here,

1. The flood itself was a work of God that belonged to this great plan and served to advance it. All the great and mighty works of God from the fall of man to the end of the world can be traced back to this great work. Seen rightly, they all appear as parts of it — so many steps God has taken toward it, so many ways of carrying it forward. Surely so great a work, so remarkable and universal a catastrophe as the flood, is no exception. It was a work God accomplished in service of this design, by which He cleared away the enemies and obstacles that were threatening to overthrow it.

Satan appears to have been in a terrible rage just before the flood, and as always, his rage was directed chiefly against the church of God to destroy it. He had filled the earth with violence and fury against it. He had drawn nearly the entire world to his side, enlisting them under his banner against Christ and His church. Scripture records that the earth "was filled with violence" — and that violence was directed chiefly against the church, in fulfillment of the prophecy: "I will put enmity between your seed and her seed." Their hostility and violence were so intense, and the enemies of the church so overwhelming — the whole world arrayed against it — that things had reached the most extreme crisis. Noah's warnings and his preaching of righteousness were completely ignored. God's Spirit had striven with them for 120 years, all in vain. The church was nearly swallowed up. It appears to have been reduced to its narrowest extent — confined to a single family. There seemed to be no prospect of anything other than the complete destruction of the church — the total wiping out of that small root that carried the blessing, from which the Redeemer was to come.

Therefore, God's destruction of those enemies of the church through the flood belongs to this work of redemption — for it was one fulfillment of the covenant of grace as it was revealed to Adam: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head." This destruction was nothing other than the destruction of the seed of the serpent in the midst of their violent assault on the seed of the woman — a deliverance of the seed of the woman from them when they were in utmost danger.

In Scripture, nearly every great destruction of nations is given the same primary explanation: their hostility and violence against God's church. Without doubt, this was one chief reason for the destruction of all nations by the flood. The giants of those days almost certainly earned their fame through their great exploits against heaven, and against Christ and His church — the remaining sons of God who had not corrupted themselves.

Scripture tells us that just before the world is destroyed by fire, the nations from the four quarters of the earth will gather against the church like the sand of the sea, spread across the breadth of the earth, and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city — and then fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them (Revelation 20:8-9). It appears that something very similar happened just before the world was destroyed by water. Therefore, the destruction by the flood belonged to the work of redemption just as much as the destruction of the Egyptians belonged to the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt, or as the destruction of Sennacherib's great army that had surrounded Jerusalem to destroy it belonged to God's redemption of that city.

By means of the flood, all the enemies of God's church — against whom that small remnant had no strength — were swept away at once. God took their side and appeared on their behalf against their enemies, drowning those they had feared in the floodwaters, just as He drowned the enemies of Israel who pursued them in the Red Sea.

God could certainly have used other means to deliver His church — He could have converted the whole world instead of drowning it, just as He could have used a different method than

drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea. But that is no argument that the method He did use was not a means of showing His redeeming mercy to His people.

When the wicked world was drowned, the wicked — the enemies of God's people — were dispossessed of the earth, and the entire earth was given to Noah and his family to possess in peace. This is just as God made room for the Israelites in Canaan by driving out their enemies before them. God's taking the possession of the enemies of the church and giving it all to His church was in keeping with the promise of the covenant of grace, as Psalm 37:9-11 says: "For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land." "Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there." "But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity."

2. Another thing belonging to this same work during this period was God's wonderfully preserving the family from which the Redeemer was to come, while all the rest of the world was drowned. Both God's drowning of the world and His saving of Noah and his family belong to this great work. The saving of Noah and his family belonged to it in two ways: this family was the line from which the Redeemer would come, and it was also the church He had redeemed — the mystical body of Christ that was saved there. The manner of God's saving these people, while all the rest of the world was overwhelmed, was remarkable and extraordinary. It was a wonderful and striking picture of the redemption of Christ — of that redemption sealed by the baptism of water — as the New Testament describes it in 1 Peter 3:20-21: "who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah,

during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The water that washed away the filth of the world and cleared it of wicked men was a picture of the blood of Christ that takes away the sin of the world. The water that delivered Noah and his sons from their enemies is a picture of the blood that delivers God's church from their sins — their worst enemies. The water that was so abundant it filled the world and rose above the highest mountains was a picture of that blood whose sufficiency is so abundant that it is enough for the whole world — enough to cover the highest mountains of sin. The ark, which was the refuge and hiding place of the church during that time of storm and flood, was a picture of Christ — the true hiding place of the church from the storms and floods of God's wrath.

3. The next thing to note is the new grant of the earth that God gave to Noah and his family immediately after the flood, grounded on the covenant of grace. The sacrifice of Christ was represented by Noah's building an altar to the Lord and offering a sacrifice of every clean animal and bird. God accepted this sacrifice, and He blessed Noah and established His covenant with him and his descendants, promising never to destroy the earth in the same way again. This showed that it is through the sacrifice of Christ that God's favor is obtained, that His people are kept safe from His destroying judgments, and that they receive the blessing of the Lord. On the occasion of this sacrifice that Noah offered to God, He gave Noah and his posterity a new grant of the earth — a new authority and dominion over the creatures, grounded on that sacrifice and

therefore grounded on the covenant of grace. This is to be understood as a different grant from the one given to Adam in Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" That original grant was not grounded on the covenant of grace — it was given to Adam while he was under the covenant of works, and therefore became obsolete when that covenant ended. The first grant of the earth to Adam was grounded in the first covenant, so when that first covenant was broken, the right it conveyed was forfeited and lost. This is why the earth was taken from mankind through the flood — the first grant had been forfeited, and God had not made another until after the flood. If the first covenant had not been broken, God would never have drowned the world and taken it from mankind, for the first grant would have remained in force. But it was broken, and so after a time God destroyed the earth when the wickedness of man was great.

After the flood, when Noah offered a sacrifice that represented the sacrifice of Christ, God accepted it — smelling the pleasing aroma of this representation of the true sacrifice of Christ, which is indeed a pleasing aroma to God. He then gave Noah a new grant of the earth, grounded on the sacrifice of Christ and on the covenant of grace established through it, with the promise added that the earth would not be destroyed again until the consummation of all things. See Genesis 8:20-22 and 9:1-3, 7. The reason this promise — that God would not again destroy the earth — was added to the grant given to Noah but not to the one given to Adam, is that this grant was grounded on the covenant of grace, of which Christ was

the guarantor and which therefore cannot be broken. This is why, even though human wickedness has raged dreadfully and the earth has been filled with violence and sin again and again throughout the ages — wickedness far more serious and aggravated than before the flood, committed against far greater light and mercy, especially in the days of the Gospel — God's patience holds. He does not destroy the earth. His mercy and forbearance endure according to His promise, and the grant established with Noah and his sons stands firm, being grounded on the covenant of grace.

4. At this point God renewed the covenant of grace with Noah and his sons, as Genesis 9:9-10 records: "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you," etc. Even the animals benefit from this, in that the earth will never be destroyed again until the consummation of all things. When Scripture uses the phrase "My covenant," it ordinarily refers to the covenant of grace. The form of expression — "I will establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you" — plainly shows that this was a covenant already in existence, already established, and that Noah would know which covenant it was by that title, namely the covenant of grace.

5. God's thwarting the plan to build the city and tower of Babel. This act of God belongs to the great work of redemption. That building project was undertaken in direct opposition to the great building of God that we are discussing. Men's attempt to build such a city and tower was a result of the corruption that mankind had quickly fallen into. This city and tower were set up in opposition to the city of God, and the god they built it for was their own pride. Having drifted into abandoning the true God, the first idol

they erected in His place was themselves — their own glory and fame. Just as this city and tower were founded on human pride and vanity and the arrogance of their minds, they were built on a foundation completely opposed to the nature of the foundation of the kingdom of Christ and His redeemed city, which is founded on humility.

Therefore God saw that this project threatened to undermine the great building founded not in human arrogance but in Christ's blood. The thing displeased the Lord, and He foiled and confounded their plan, not allowing them to complete it — just as God will ultimately thwart and confound every other building set up in opposition to the great work of redemption.

In Isaiah 2, where the prophet foretells God's establishing the kingdom of Christ in the world, he also foretells how God will humble human arrogance in preparation for it — how the day of the Lord will come against every high tower and every fortified wall, and so on. Christ's kingdom is established by bringing down every high thing to make way for it, as 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." What God does in an individual soul to make way for the kingdom of Christ is to destroy Babel in that soul.

The builders intended to raise Babel up to heaven. The building that is the subject of our discussion is itself designed to reach to heaven — and it will indeed reach to the highest heavens at the end of the world when it is finished. Therefore God would not allow the building of His enemies, which they intended to raise to heaven in opposition to it, to succeed. Had they gone forward and

succeeded in building that city and tower, it could have kept the mass of wicked men — the enemies of the church — united together, which was their design. They might have remained joined in one vast, powerful city, making them far too powerful for the city of God and capable of swallowing it up entirely.

This city of Babel is the same as the city of Babylon — for Babylon in the original language is Babel. Babylon is the city Scripture consistently presents as the chief opponent of the city of God. Babylon and Jerusalem — or Zion — are set against each other repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments. Despite the early setback God imposed on it, this city later became a powerful and terrible enemy to the city of God. But it likely would have been far more powerful and far more capable of harming and destroying the church of God had it not been checked at the beginning.

Thus it was out of kindness to His church in the world, and in pursuit of the great design of redemption, that God put a stop to the building of the city and tower of Babel.

6. The dispersing of the nations and the dividing of the earth among its inhabitants came immediately after God halted the building of Babel. This was done in a way that best served the great design of redemption. In particular, God had in view the future spread of the Gospel among the nations. They were placed so that the boundaries of their territories were arranged around the land of Canaan — the land appointed for the dwelling of God's people — in a way best suited to the spreading of the Gospel among them. Deuteronomy 32:8 says, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel." Acts 17:26-27 says, "and He made from one man every na-

tion of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him." The land of Canaan was the most conveniently situated place in the world for spreading the light of the Gospel from there to the nations generally. In the period immediately after Christ, the inhabited world was concentrated mainly in the Roman Empire — the countries surrounding Jerusalem — perfectly positioned for the Gospel to spread outward from that place. Seeing the advantage this arrangement of nations gave to the advancing of the great work of redemption — and the disadvantage it posed to his own kingdom — the devil afterward led many nations to the most remote parts of the world, attempting to put them out of reach of the Gospel. In this way he led some to America, and others to distant northern regions that are almost inaccessible.

7. Another thing to note from this period was God's preserving true religion in the line from which Christ was to come, at a time when the world generally fell into idolatry and the church was in grave danger of being swallowed up in the widespread corruption. Although God had recently worked so wonderfully for the deliverance of His church — going so far as to destroy all the rest of the world for its sake — and although He had recently renewed and confirmed His covenant of grace with Noah and his sons, the corrupt human heart is so prone to wander from God, to sink into wickedness, and to fall into darkness, delusion, and idolatry, that the world soon after the flood descended into gross idolatry. By the time of Abraham, the problem had become nearly universal. The earth had become very corrupt even by the time of the building of Babel, and even God's own people — even the line from which

Christ was to come — were to some degree infected with idolatry. Joshua 24:2 records, "Your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates River in ancient times — Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor — and they served other gods." "The other side of the flood" refers to the region beyond the Euphrates River, where Abraham's ancestors lived.

This does not mean they were entirely given over to idolatry and had forsaken the true God entirely. For God is called the God of Nahor in Genesis 31:53: "The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." Rather, they had simply been touched to some degree by the nearly universal corruption of the times — as Solomon was partially infected by idolatrous corruption, as the children of Israel in Egypt are said to have served other gods though the true church of God still existed among them, and as idols were kept for a considerable time in Jacob's household, the corruption having been brought from Paddan-aram, from where he had taken his wives.

This was the second time the church had come close to being entirely extinguished by the corruption and widespread falling away from true religion. Yet true religion was still preserved in the family from which Christ was to come. This is another remarkable example of God's preserving His church in a time of a sweeping flood of wickedness — where, though the god of this world raged and nearly devoured God's church, God still did not allow the gates of hell to prevail against it.

PART 3. FROM THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM TO MOSES



I now turn to show how the work of redemption was carried on through the third period of Old Testament history, beginning with the calling of Abraham and extending to Moses. Here,

1. It pleased God now to separate the person from whom Christ was to come from the rest of the world, so that His church might be sustained in that family and its descendants until Christ would arrive. He did this by calling Abraham out of his own country and away from his relatives to a distant land that God would show him — first bringing him out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran, and then into the land of Canaan.

As noted before, the world's corruption through idolatry had by now become widespread; mankind was almost entirely overtaken by it. God therefore saw it necessary, in order to preserve true religion in the world, that a family be separated from the rest of the world. It had become urgent to take this step, lest the church of Christ be completely swept away in the apostasy. For the church of God itself, which had been sustained through the line of Abraham's ancestors, was already considerably corrupted. Most of Abraham's own country and relatives had fallen away, and without

some extraordinary act of providence, true religion in this line would likely have died out within a generation or two. God therefore saw it was time to call Abraham — the man in whose family He intended to preserve true religion — out of his country and from his relatives to a far distant land, so that his descendants could live there as a people separate from all the rest of the world, and true religion could be preserved among them while the rest of mankind was swallowed up in paganism.

The land of the Chaldeans, which Abraham was called to leave, was the region around Babel — Babel, or Babylon, being its chief city. Scholars conclude from some of the oldest historical accounts that this land was where idolatry first began, and that Babel and Chaldea were the original home of idol worship, from which it spread to other nations. This is why the land of the Chaldeans — the country of Babylon — is called in Scripture "the land of carved images," as Jeremiah 50:35 and 38 show: "A sword against the Chaldeans," declares the Lord, "and against the inhabitants of Babylon and against her officials and her wise men! ... A drought on her waters, and they will be dried up! For it is a land of idols, and they are mad over fearsome idols." God called Abraham out of this idolatrous country to a great distance from it. When Abraham arrived in the new land, God gave him no inheritance there — not even a foothold — but he lived as a stranger and a foreigner, so that he and his family might remain separate from the whole world.

This was something new — God had never taken this approach before. His church had not previously been separated from the rest of the world in this way, but had lived among them with no barrier to keep them apart. The harmful consequences of this had been

seen more than once. Before the flood, the result of God's people living intermingled with the wicked world — with no meaningful wall of separation — was that the sons of the church intermarried with others, and almost all quickly became infected, bringing the church to the brink of extinction. The method God used then to protect the church was to drown the wicked world and save the church in the ark. Now, before Abraham was called, the world had again become corrupt. But this time God took a different approach. He did not destroy the wicked world and save Abraham, his wife, and Lot in an ark — instead He called them to go and live separately from the rest of the world.

This was something new and significant that God did toward the work of redemption. It happened at roughly the midpoint of the period between the fall of man and the coming of Christ — with about two thousand years still remaining before Christ the great Redeemer would arrive. But by calling Abraham, the ancestor of Christ, a foundation was laid for sustaining the church of Christ in the world until Christ would come. For with the world having fallen into idolatry, it was necessary that the seed of the woman be separated from the idolatrous world in order for this to happen.

It was also necessary to have a particular nation set apart from the rest of the world to receive the types and prophecies needed to prepare the way for Christ's coming — a people to whom the oracles of God could be entrusted, who would preserve the record of God's great works of creation and providence, from whom Christ would be born, and from whom the light of the Gospel would go out to the rest of the world. These purposes could not have been achieved if God's people had lived intermingled with the pagan world throughout those two thousand years. The calling of

Abraham may therefore be seen as a kind of new foundation laid for the visible church of God — a more distinct and organized form of the church — to be sustained and built on this foundation from that point forward until Christ would actually come, and then through Him to be spread to all nations. As the person in whom this foundation was laid, Abraham is presented in Scripture as the father of the entire church — the father of all who believe. He is, as it were, the root from which the visible church grew as a distinct tree — through Christ, who is both Abraham's descendant and the source of the church. From this tree, after Christ came, the natural branches were broken off and the Gentiles were grafted in. So Abraham remains the father of the church, the root of the tree, through Christ his offspring. It is the same tree — sprung from that small beginning in Abraham's time — that has in these days of the Gospel spread its branches over much of the earth. It will fill the whole earth in due time, and at the end of the world will be transplanted from earthly soil into the paradise of God.

2. Accompanying this calling was a more detailed and full revelation and confirmation of the covenant of grace than had ever been given before. Before this there had been, as it were, two particular and solemn presentations of this covenant — one at the beginning of the first period, when the covenant of grace was revealed to our first parents shortly after the fall, and one at the beginning of the second period, when God solemnly renewed the covenant of grace with Noah and his family after the flood. Now there was a third, at the beginning of the third period, at and following the calling of Abraham. Since it was now much closer to the time of Christ's coming — about halfway between the fall and the coming of Christ — this revelation of the covenant was far fuller

than anything before it. The covenant was now revealed in more detail. It was now revealed not only that Christ would come, but that He would be Abraham's own descendant, and it was now promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. God spoke these promises to Abraham repeatedly. The first promise came when God first called him, in Genesis 12:2: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing." The same promise was renewed after Abraham came into the land of Canaan (Genesis 13:14 and following). The covenant was renewed again after Abraham returned from the defeat of the kings (Genesis 15:5-6). And again after his offering up of Isaac (Genesis 22:16-18).

In this renewal of the covenant of grace with Abraham, several particulars about the covenant were revealed more fully than ever before — not only that Christ would be descended from Abraham, but also the calling of the Gentiles and the bringing of all nations into the church. The promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed was now made known. The great condition of the covenant of grace — which is faith — was also more fully revealed at this time. Genesis 15:5-6 records, "And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." The New Testament draws much attention to this passage as the basis for calling Abraham the father of all who believe.

Just as there was now a fuller revelation of the covenant of grace, so there was also a further confirmation of it through seals and pledges than had ever been given before. In particular, God

now instituted a certain sacrament to be a lasting seal of this covenant in the visible church until Christ would come — namely, circumcision. Circumcision was a seal of this covenant of grace, as is clear from its first institution, described in Genesis 17. It appears there as a seal of the covenant by which God promised to make Abraham a father of many nations, as is evident from verse 5 read alongside verses 9-10. We are explicitly told that it was a seal of the righteousness of faith in Romans 4:11, where the apostle says of Abraham, "and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised."

As I noted earlier, God called Abraham so that his family and descendants might be kept separate from the rest of the world until Christ would come — which God saw to be necessary for the reasons already described. Circumcision was the primary boundary of separation. It distinguished the descendants of Abraham from the world and maintained that separation more effectively than any other single observance.

In addition to circumcision, there were other occasional seals, pledges, and confirmations of this covenant that Abraham received. In particular, God gave Abraham a remarkable pledge of the fulfillment of His promises in Abraham's victory over Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him. Chedorlaomer appears to have been a great emperor who ruled over much of the known world at that time. Though his seat of power was in Elam — perhaps nearly a thousand miles from Canaan — his empire extended over many parts of the land of Canaan, as Genesis 14:4-7 makes clear. Scholars believe he was a king of the Assyrian empire of that era, which had been established earlier by Nimrod at Babel. It was the custom for powerful kings of that era to build new cities

as seats of empire, as Genesis 10:10-12 shows. So it is thought that Chedorlaomer had gone out, built a city in Elam, and made it his capital, with the other kings who came with him serving as his deputies over their respective territories. Yet despite the might of his empire and the great army he brought into Abraham's land, Abraham — armed only with the trained servants born in his own household — conquered, routed, and defeated this powerful emperor, the kings with him, and all their forces. This victory was received from God as a pledge of what He had promised: the victory that Christ, Abraham's seed, would win over the nations of the earth, seizing the gates of His enemies. Isaiah 41 plainly presents it in this light. That chapter foretells the future glorious victory the church will win over the nations of the world, as the first, tenth, and fifteenth verses show. And Abraham's victory over so great an emperor and his armies is spoken of as a pledge and foretaste of that victory of the church, as verses 2-3 show: "Who has aroused one from the east whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers nations before him and subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, as the wind-driven chaff with his bow. He pursues them, passing on in safety, by a path his feet have not traveled before."

Another remarkable confirmation of the covenant of grace came when Abraham returned from the defeat of the kings, and Melchizedek king of Salem — who was also a priest of the Most High God and a great type of Christ — came out to meet him, blessed him, and brought out bread and wine. The bread and wine signified the same blessings of the covenant of grace as the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. So just as Abraham had a seal of the covenant in circumcision — equivalent to baptism — he now

also received a seal equivalent to the Lord's Supper. Melchizedek coming to meet him with this seal of the covenant of grace, on the occasion of his victory over the northern kings, confirmed that the victory was a pledge of God's fulfillment of that same covenant. For it is this mercy that Melchizedek with his bread and wine is celebrating, as his words in Genesis 14:19-20 show.

Another confirmation God gave Abraham of the covenant of grace was the vision he received during the deep sleep that fell upon him — the smoking furnace and flaming torch that passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, as recorded in the latter part of Genesis 15. The sacrifice, like all sacrifices, represented the sacrifice of Christ. The smoking furnace that passed through the midst of that sacrifice first represented the sufferings of Christ. The flaming torch that followed — shining with a clear and bright light — represents the glory that followed Christ's sufferings and was won by them.

Another remarkable pledge God gave Abraham of the fulfillment of the covenant of grace was the gift of a child — the one from whom Christ would descend — in Abraham's old age. Scripture speaks of this as such a pledge in Hebrews 11:11-12 and Romans 4:18 and following.

Yet another remarkable pledge God gave Abraham of the covenant's fulfillment was His delivering Isaac after he had been laid upon the wood of the altar to be slain. This confirmed Abraham's faith in God's promise that Christ would come from Isaac's descendants, and was a picture of the resurrection of Christ, as Hebrews 11:17-19 shows. Because this was given as a

confirmation of the covenant of grace, God renewed that covenant with Abraham on this occasion, as Genesis 24:15 and following shows.

So we see how much more fully the covenant of grace was revealed and confirmed in Abraham's time than ever before. Through this, Abraham appears to have had a clearer understanding and sight of Christ the great Redeemer and of the future things to be accomplished through Him than any of the saints who came before. This is why Christ Himself remarks that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and saw it and was glad (John 8:56). God was pleased to make a great advance at this time in the building He had been constructing since the beginning of the world.

3. The next thing to note here is God's preservation of the patriarchs for so long a time among the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, and from all other enemies. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were those from whom Christ was to come, and they had been separated from the world so that the church might be sustained through them. Therefore, in preserving them, the great design of redemption was upheld and carried forward. God kept them safe and prevented the inhabitants of the land where they lived as foreigners from destroying them — a remarkable act of providence. For the inhabitants of the land were extremely wicked even at that time, though they grew more wicked afterward. This is clear from Genesis 15:16: "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" — meaning, though their wickedness is already very great, it has not yet reached its full measure. Their great wickedness is also evident in Abraham's and Isaac's strong desire that their children not marry the daughters of the land. Abraham in his old age was not at peace

until he had made his servant swear that he would not take a wife for his son from the daughters of the land. Isaac and Rebekah were willing to send Jacob all the way to Paddan-aram to find a wife. And when Esau married daughters of the land, we are told they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Further evidence of their great wickedness is the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim — cities of Canaan, though they were probably exceptionally wicked even by the standards of the region.

Being so wicked, the Canaanites were likely to harbor the most intense hatred toward these holy men — in keeping with what had been declared at the beginning: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." The holy lives of the patriarchs were a constant rebuke of the Canaanites' wickedness. Beyond that, the patriarchs could not help but reprove the wickedness around them, as we see in Lot's case in Sodom. We are told he was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds and that he preached righteousness to them.

The patriarchs were all the more vulnerable to hostility because they were foreigners and outsiders in the land, with no inheritance there. People are more easily irritated with strangers and more ready to find fault with anything that offends them — as the men of Sodom reacted to Lot. He had gently reproved their wickedness, and they said in response, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge" — and they threatened him with violence.

Yet God wonderfully preserved Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Jacob, and their families among them — though they were few in number and could easily have been destroyed. This is celebrated as a remarkable example of God's preserving mercy toward His church in Psalm 105:12 and following: "When they were only a few men in number, very few, and strangers in it, and they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no one to oppress them, and He reproved kings for their sakes: 'Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.'"

This preservation was in some cases especially remarkable — those instances where the people of the land were greatly angered and provoked, as they were by Simeon and Levi's treatment of the Shechemites, described in Genesis 34:30 and following. God then miraculously preserved Jacob and his family, restraining the provoked people through an unusual terror placed on their minds. Genesis 35:5 records, "As they journeyed, there was a great terror from God upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob."

God's preservation of the patriarchs extended beyond protection from the Canaanites — it also included deliverance from all others who intended them harm. When Jacob and his company were pursued by Laban, who was full of rage and coming against him as an enemy, God met Laban and rebuked him, saying, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad." How wonderfully God also preserved Jacob from his brother Esau, who came out with an armed force with a clear intention to destroy him. In answer to Jacob's prayer when he wrestled with Christ at

Peniel, God miraculously turned Esau's heart, so that instead of meeting Jacob as an enemy with violence and destruction, Esau met him as a friend and brother and did him no harm.

So this small group — this little root that carried the blessing of the Redeemer — was preserved in the midst of enemies and dangers, not unlike the preserving of the ark in the midst of the stormy flood.

4. The next thing to mention is the terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities. This advanced the great design and work of redemption in two ways. First, it powerfully restrained the inhabitants of the land from harming those holy strangers God had brought to live among them. Lot was one of those strangers — he had come to the land with Abraham. Sodom was destroyed for the city's contemptuous treatment of Lot, the preacher of righteousness whom God had sent among them. Their destruction came directly upon their committing a most outrageous and wicked assault on Lot and the strangers who had entered his house — those angels whom the men of Sodom apparently took to be some of Lot's former acquaintances who had come from his home country to visit him. They surrounded Lot's house in the most brazen manner, intending a monstrous act of violence against those strangers, and threatening to do even worse to Lot himself.

In the midst of this God struck them with blindness, and the following morning the city and the surrounding region were destroyed in a terrible storm of fire and sulfur. This dreadful destruction was witnessed by the rest of the inhabitants of the land and greatly restrained them from ever harming those holy strangers again. It undoubtedly struck a deep fear and terror into their

minds, making them afraid to touch the patriarchs. It was probably one of the principal means God used to protect and preserve them. When the reason is given why the inhabitants of the land did not pursue Jacob after being so provoked by the destruction of the Shechemites — "the terror of God was upon them" — it is very likely that this terror was rooted in the memory of Sodom. They remembered the shocking destruction that had come upon those cities because of their abuse of Lot, and so they did not dare harm Jacob and his family, though they were severely provoked to do so.

The second way this terrible destruction advanced the great work of redemption was by dramatically displaying the severity of God's law, making people feel their desperate need for redeeming mercy. The work of redemption has never been carried on without this. From the beginning, the law has served as a teacher to bring people to Christ.

Under the Old Testament, there was a much greater need for some extraordinary and visible display of God's wrath against sin than there is in the days of the Gospel — both because a future state and the eternal misery of hell were not yet as clearly revealed, and because God's terrible justice against sin had not yet been displayed so powerfully in the sufferings of Christ. Therefore, God's self-revelation in those days was typically accompanied by far more external terror than it is in these days of the Gospel. When God appeared at Mount Sinai to give the law, it was with thunder and lightning, a thick cloud, and the sound of a very loud trumpet. Yet some visible and terrifying display of God's wrath against sin was especially necessary even before the giving of the law. Before the flood, the terrors of the law were handed down through the tradition of Adam's testimony. Adam himself lived 930 years and was

able to tell the church of God's dreadful warnings given in the covenant with him, and of the terrible consequences of the fall — as someone who witnessed and experienced them firsthand. Others who had known Adam personally lived until the time of the flood. And the destruction of the world by the flood served to display the terrors of the law and make God's wrath against sin visible, impressing on people the absolute necessity of redeeming mercy. Some who had witnessed the flood were still alive in Abraham's time.

But by this period, that memory had largely faded. God was therefore pleased once again — in a most shocking manner — to display His wrath against sin through the destruction of these cities. The manner of their destruction was the most vivid picture of hell that the world had ever seen, which is why the apostle Jude writes, "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7). God rained storms of fire and sulfur upon them. The cities were likely destroyed by thick flashes of lightning. The streams of burning sulfur were so intense as to consume all these cities entirely, so that they perished in the flames of divine wrath. In this could be seen the terrifying wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men — showing people their need for redemption and thus advancing the great work.

5. God again renewed and confirmed the covenant of grace, first to Isaac and then to Jacob. He renewed it with Isaac as recorded in Genesis 26:3-4: "I will perform the oath which I swore to your father Abraham, and I will multiply your descendants as

the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Afterward it was renewed and confirmed to Jacob — first in Isaac's blessing of him, in which Isaac acted and spoke by extraordinary divine direction. In that blessing, the blessings of the covenant of grace were established with Jacob and his seed, as Genesis 27:29 records: "May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you." By missing this blessing, Esau also missed being an heir of the benefits of the covenant of grace.

The covenant was renewed and confirmed to Jacob again at Bethel, in his vision of a ladder reaching to heaven — a ladder that was a symbol of the way of salvation through Christ. The stone on which Jacob rested was a type of Christ, the Stone of Israel, upon which the spiritual Israel rests. This is evident from the fact that on this occasion the stone was anointed and used as an altar. We know that Christ is the Anointed of God and the only true altar. While Jacob was resting on this stone and seeing the ladder, God appeared to him as his covenant God and renewed the covenant of grace with him. Genesis 28:14 records, "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Jacob received another remarkable confirmation of this covenant at Peniel, where he wrestled with God and prevailed — where Christ appeared to him in human form, in the form of that human nature which He would afterward take into personal union with His divine nature.

God renewed His covenant with Jacob once more after he had returned from Paddan-aram and had gone back to Bethel — to the stone where he had rested and had the vision of the ladder — as recorded in Genesis 35:10 and following.

So the covenant of grace was renewed at this time far more often than it had ever been before. The light of the Gospel was now beginning to shine much brighter, as the time of Christ's coming drew nearer.

6. The next thing to note is how God remarkably preserved the family from which Christ was to come from perishing in a famine, through the instrument of Joseph. When a seven-year famine was approaching, God in a remarkable act of providence sent Joseph ahead to Egypt to provide for and feed Jacob and his family, and to keep the holy seed alive — which otherwise would have perished. Joseph explained this purpose himself in Genesis 50:20: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." How many times had this holy root — carrying within it the future branch of righteousness, the glorious Redeemer — been in danger of being destroyed! But God wonderfully preserved it.

This salvation of the house of Israel by Joseph's hand bore a remarkable resemblance to the salvation of Christ. The children of Israel were saved by Joseph, their own brother and kinsman, from perishing in the famine — just as the one who saves the souls of the spiritual Israel from spiritual famine is their near kinsman, one who is not ashamed to call them brothers. Joseph was a brother they had hated, sold, and as good as killed — for they had planned to kill him. So Christ is one whom we naturally hate, whom by our wicked lives we have traded away for the empty things of the

world, and whom by our sins we have put to death. Joseph was first in a state of humiliation — a servant, just as Christ appeared in the form of a servant — then he was cast into a dungeon, just as Christ descended into the grave. When he rose out of the dungeon, he was in a state of great exaltation, at the king's right hand as his deputy, reigning over all his kingdom, providing food, and preserving life. In this exalted state he gave food to his brothers and saved their lives — just as Christ was exalted at God's right hand to be Prince and Savior to His brothers, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, even for those who had hated and sold Him.

7. After this, a prophecy was given concerning Christ that was more specific than any that had come before — namely, the prophecy in Jacob's blessing of his son Judah. This was more specific than any previous prophecy in that it showed from whose descendants Christ would come. When God called Abraham, it was revealed that Christ would be of Abraham's posterity. Before that, there was no revelation narrowing Christ's lineage beyond Noah's descendants. After that, it was narrowed further — for though Abraham had many sons, it was revealed that Christ would be of Isaac's posterity. Then it was narrowed further still: when Isaac had two sons, it was revealed that Christ would be of Jacob's posterity. And now, though Jacob had twelve sons, it was revealed that Christ would be of Judah's posterity — Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His great acts are chiefly in view in Genesis 49:8: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you." "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up?" This prediction is also more specific about the time of

Christ's coming than anything before it, as verse 10 shows: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." The prophecy here of the calling of the Gentiles following Christ's coming also seems more clear than any before it, in the words "to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."

So we see how that Gospel light which first dawned immediately after the fall of man has been gradually growing brighter.

8. The work of redemption was carried on during this period through God's remarkable preservation of the children of Israel in Egypt, when the power of Egypt was bent on destroying them entirely. They appeared to be completely at the mercy of the Egyptians — they were their slaves, subject to Pharaoh's power. Pharaoh worked to weaken them through brutal forced labor. When that did not achieve his goal, he set out to wipe out the entire race by commanding that every male child be drowned. But despite everything Pharaoh could do, God wonderfully preserved them — and not only preserved them, but caused them to multiply greatly. Instead of being wiped out, they grew rapidly in number.

9. Here it is also important to note not only the preservation of the nation, but God's remarkable sustaining of His visible church within that nation, at a time when it was in danger of being overwhelmed by the idolatry of Egypt. The children of Israel had been among the Egyptians for a long time as slaves, with no means to keep God's ordinances among themselves or maintain public worship or public instruction to uphold true religion. With no written word of God available, they gradually lost much of the true religion

and adopted the idolatry of Egypt. The greater part of the people fell away to the worship of Egypt's gods. We learn this from Ezekiel 20:6-8 and from Ezekiel 23:8.

This was now the third time God's church had nearly been swallowed up and swept away by the wickedness of the world — once before the flood, a second time before the calling of Abraham, and now a third time in Egypt. Yet God did not allow His church to be completely overwhelmed. He saved it still — like the ark in the flood, and like His preservation of Moses in the midst of the waters, placed in a basket of reeds where he was in the greatest danger of being consumed. True religion was still maintained among some, and God still had a people among them even in that miserable, corrupt, and dark time. The parents of Moses were true servants of God, as Hebrews 11:23 tells us: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

I have now completed the third period of Old Testament history and shown how the work of redemption was carried on from the calling of Abraham to Moses. We have seen many great things accomplished toward this work and great advances in this building beyond anything that had come before.

PART 4. FROM MOSES TO DAVID



I now turn to the fourth period, which extends from Moses to David. I will show how the work of redemption was carried on through this period as well.

1. The first thing to consider is the redemption of the church of God out of Egypt — the most remarkable of all Old Testament redemptions of the church of God, and the greatest pledge and forerunner of the redemption of Christ. Scripture gives it more attention than any other such redemption. Indeed it was the greatest type of Christ's redemption of any providential event in history. This redemption was accomplished by Jesus Christ, as is clear from the fact that it was wrought by the One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush — for it was that person who sent Moses to deliver the people. That person was Christ, as is evident because He is called the angel of the Lord in Exodus 3:2-3. The bush represented the human nature of Christ, which is called the branch. The bush grew on Mount Sinai, also called Horeb — a word meaning a dry place — just as the human nature of Christ was "a root out of dry ground." The bush burning with fire represented the sufferings of Christ in the fire of God's wrath. It burned but was not consumed — just as Christ, though He suffered intensely, did not perish but overcame at last and rose from His suf-

ferings. Because this great mystery of the incarnation and sufferings of Christ was being depicted here, Moses said, "I will turn aside now and see this marvelous sight." A marvelous sight indeed — for it showed God revealed in the flesh, suffering a dreadful death, and rising from the dead.

This was He who redeemed the church out of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh — just as Christ by His death and sufferings redeems His people from Satan, the spiritual Pharaoh. He freed them from their service and brutal labor, just as Christ frees His people from the cruel slavery of sin and Satan. He redeemed them, as Scripture says, from "the iron furnace," just as Christ redeems His church from a furnace of fire and eternal burning. He redeemed them with a strong hand and outstretched arm and by great and terrible judgments on their enemies — just as Christ with mighty power triumphs over rulers and authorities and executes terrible judgments on His church's enemies, crushing the serpent's head. He saved them — when others were destroyed — by the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb, just as God's church is saved from death by the sprinkling of Christ's blood while the rest of the world is destroyed. God brought the people out over the strong objections of the Egyptians, who could not bear to let them go — just as Christ rescues His people from the hands of the devil over Satan's fierce resistance, when his proud heart cannot bear to be overcome.

In that redemption, Christ not only freed the people from the Egyptians but also from the demons — the gods of Egypt. Before this, the people had been in a state of servitude to Egypt's gods as much as to its people. Christ, the seed of the woman, now fulfilled the curse on the serpent in a remarkable way by crushing his head.

Exodus 12:12 records, "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments." Hell was as much involved in that confrontation — and more so — as Egypt was. Satan's pride and cruelty had more to do with it than Pharaoh's. He did his utmost against the people and opposed their redemption with all his power. But Scripture says that when God redeemed His people out of Egypt, He crushed the heads of the sea monsters in the waters, shattered the heads of Leviathan, and gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness (Psalm 74:12-14). God forced their enemies to release them so they might serve Him, as Zechariah also observes with respect to the church under the Gospel in Luke 1:74-75.

The people of Israel went out with a high hand, and Christ went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire. There was a glorious triumph over both earth and hell in that deliverance. When Pharaoh and his armies — and through them, Satan — pursued the people, Christ destroyed them in the Red Sea. The Lord triumphed gloriously; horse and rider He hurled into the sea, where they sank to their final sleep and never pursued the children of Israel again. So all of Christ's enemies are overthrown in His blood — which, by its infinite sufficiency and the magnitude of the sufferings with which it was shed, is fittingly represented by a sea. The Red Sea did represent Christ's blood, as is clear because the apostle compares the children of Israel's passage through the Red Sea to baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) — and we all know that the water of baptism represents Christ's blood.

So Christ, the angel of God's presence, in His love and pity, redeemed His people and carried them in those ancient days as on eagles' wings, so that none of their proud and hostile enemies — neither Egyptians nor demons — could touch them.

This was an entirely new thing that God did toward the great work of redemption — God had never done anything like it before (Deuteronomy 4:32-34). It was a major advance in the work of redemption that had been unfolding since the fall of man — a great step in divine providence toward preparing the way for Christ's coming into the world and for the working out of His great and eternal redemption. For this was the people from whom Christ was to come. Here we can see how that plant flourished that God had planted in Abraham. Though the family from which Christ was to come had been separated from the rest of the world to some degree since the calling of Abraham, that separation had proved insufficient on its own. Though they had been kept as strangers and foreigners, prevented from merging into other nations politically, they had still lived intermingled with other peoples — and as events had shown, this had put them in danger of completely losing true religion and being overtaken by the idolatry of their neighbors. God now, through this redemption, separated them as a nation from all other nations, to exist as their own political and religious community, with no entanglement with pagan nations. In this way they could remain separate until Christ would come, and the church of Christ could be preserved and continue to hold the oracles of God until that time — maintaining the types and prophecies of Christ, the historical records, and the other divine instruction necessary to prepare the way for His coming.

2. Just as this people were separated to be God's own special people, all other peoples on the face of the earth were left entirely to paganism. As far as God's providence is concerned, this belongs to the great work of redemption we are discussing. It was one of the things God arranged in His providence to prepare the way for Christ's coming and for the great salvation He was to accomplish in the world. Its purpose was to prepare for the more glorious and remarkable victory and triumph of Christ's power and grace over a wicked and miserable world, and to make Christ's salvation of mankind all the more evident. This is the very explanation Scripture itself gives in Romans 11:30-32. Speaking to the Gentiles who had formerly been pagans, the apostle says, "For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all." That is, it was God's will that the whole world — both Jews and Gentiles — should be visibly and openly in unbelief, so that God's mercy and Christ's salvation toward them all would be clearly visible. The apostle is not speaking only of the unbelief that is natural to all people, but of the visible and open kind — such as the Jews exhibited when they openly rejected Christ and ceased to be a professing people. The apostle observes that first the Gentile nations were included in open rejection of the true religion before Christ came — to prepare the way for the calling of the Gentiles, which happened soon after Christ arrived, so that God's mercy to them would be all the more evident. Then the Jews were rejected and fell away from the visible church — to prepare the way for the calling of the Jews, which will take place in the

latter days. So it will be seen of all nations — both Jews and Gentiles — that they are visibly redeemed by Christ from being visibly outsiders to the people of God, without hope, and without God in the world.

We cannot determine precisely when the Gentile nations' departure from the true God — their being shut up in visible unbelief — became universal. Their falling away was gradual, as noted before. It was widespread in Abraham's time, but not yet total — for we find that Melchizedek, one of the kings of Canaan, was a priest of the Most High God. After this, true religion was maintained for a time among some of Abraham's other descendants besides Jacob's family, and also among some of Nahor's descendants — as we see in the examples of Job, his three friends, and Elihu. The land of Uz, where Job lived, was possessed by the descendants of Uz — or Huz — the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, mentioned in Genesis 22:21. Bildad the Shuhite was from the line of Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2), and Elihu the Buzite was from Buz, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. So true religion survived among some people outside of Israel for a time after Abraham. But it did not last long. It is probable that their final rejection and surrender to idolatry occurred around the time God separated the children of Israel out of Egypt to serve Him — for the Israelites are often reminded at that point that God had now separated them to be His own special people, distinct from all other peoples on earth, His people alone, His portion while others were rejected. This seems to show us that God now chose them in such a way that His visible choice of them was accompanied by a visible rejection of all other nations — that God visibly came and took up His residence with them, as if forsaking all other peoples.

Just as the first calling of the Gentiles after Christ came was accompanied by the rejection of the Jews, so the first calling of the Jews to be God's people — when they were called out of Egypt — was accompanied by the rejection of the Gentiles.

So all the Gentile nations throughout the whole world — all nations except Israel and those who joined themselves to Israel — were left and given over to idolatry. They remained in this condition for many ages, from that time until Christ came — a period of about fifteen hundred years. They were held in unbelief for so long a time to provide thorough proof of the necessity of a Savior. The long trial would show, beyond all dispute, that mankind was completely unable to deliver itself from the terrible darkness, misery, and subjection to the devil into which it had fallen. It would demonstrate that all the wisdom of the philosophers and the wisest men the pagan world produced could not deliver them from their darkness — making the greater glory belong to Jesus Christ, who when He came, enlightened and delivered them through His glorious Gospel. In this the wonderful wisdom of God was displayed in preparing the way for Christ's redemption. This is what Scripture teaches in 1 Corinthians 1:21: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

I could consider here as another work of God advancing the overall work of redemption that wonderful deliverance He worked for the children of Israel at the Red Sea, when they were pursued by the armies of Egypt and appeared on the verge of being destroyed — with no humanly conceivable way of escape. But since

this may be seen as part of their redemption out of Egypt, and as belonging to that more general work, I will not elaborate further on it.

3. The next thing to note in this period in terms of what was done toward the work of redemption is God's giving the moral law in such an awe-inspiring manner at Mount Sinai. This was another new thing that God did — a new step taken in this great work. Deuteronomy 4:33 says, "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?" It was a great thing that God did toward this work — whether we consider it as a fresh presentation of the covenant of works or as a rule of life.

The covenant of works was presented here as a teacher to lead people to Christ — not only for the use of Israel during the Old Testament period, but for the use of God's church throughout all ages. It serves as an instrument the great Redeemer uses to convince people of their sin and misery and helpless condition, and of God's awesome and fearsome majesty and justice as lawgiver — making people feel their desperate need of Christ as Savior. The work of redemption in its saving effect on human souls, throughout all its progress to the end, is not carried on without the use of this law given at Sinai.

It was given in an awe-inspiring manner — with a terrifyingly loud and fearful voice, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Even Moses, though a close friend of God, said, "I am full of fear and trembling." The voice was accompanied by thunder and lightning, the mountain blazing with fire up to the middle of the sky, and the earth itself shaking and trembling. All of this was to make clear how great was the authority, power, and justice that stood be-

hind this law and demanded its fulfillment — how strictly God would require compliance, and how terrible His wrath would be against every person who broke it. These realities were meant to confront people thoroughly, to test their hearts and show them how impossible it is to obtain salvation by the works of the law, and to make them see their absolute need for a mediator.

If we regard this law given at Mount Sinai not as the covenant of works but as a rule of life, then the Redeemer has used it from that time to the end of the world as a guide for His people — showing them the way they must walk if they are to reach heaven. For a life of sincere and wholehearted obedience to this law is the narrow way that leads to life.

4. The next notable thing in this period is God's giving the ceremonial law — by which I mean most or all of the commands given through Moses that did not properly belong to the moral law. This includes not only what are commonly called ceremonial laws, as distinct from civil laws (the laws governing the ceremonies and details of Jewish worship and their religious community), but also many if not all the civil laws given for governing the Jewish nation. Many of these were typological in nature. The giving of this typological law was another great thing God did in this period to build up the glorious structure of redemption He had been constructing from the beginning of the world. There had been many typological acts of providence before this — representing Christ and His redemption — and some typological ordinances, especially circumcision and sacrifice. But now, instead of representing the great Redeemer through just a few institutions, God gave a law filled with nothing but varied and countless typological pictures of good things to come. Through this law the nation was directed how —

year by year, month by month, and day by day, in their religious observances and in the conduct of their ecclesiastical and civil life — to portray something of Christ. One observance showed one thing, presenting one doctrine or one benefit; another showed another — so that the whole nation through this law was, as it were, constituted as a typological community. In this way the Gospel was abundantly displayed to that nation, so that there is scarcely a doctrine of it that is not specifically taught and portrayed by some observance of this law — though it was in shadows and under a veil, as Moses put a veil over his face when it shone.

To this typological law belong all the precepts relating to the construction of the tabernacle that was set up in the wilderness, along with all its form, details, and furnishings.

5. Around this time, God's church received the first written word of God that His people had ever possessed. This was another great step in the work of redemption — a new and glorious advance of the building. This was the beginning of the great written rule that God gave for governing the faith, worship, and practice of His church in all ages from that point to the end of the world. This rule grew and was added to over many ages until it was completed and the canon of Scripture was finished by the apostle John. Whether the very first written word was the Ten Commandments written on tablets of stone by the finger of God, or the book of Job, is not essential to determine. Nor does it matter greatly whether Job was written by Moses, as some think, or by Elihu, as others believe. If it was written by Elihu, it was written before the period we are now examining — but only just before, as is apparent from considering the lineage of the people mentioned in it and the great age Job had already lived when it was written.

The written word of God is the chief instrument Christ has used to carry on His work of redemption in all ages since it was given. There was now a clear need for God's word to be put in writing as a fixed standard for His church. Before this, the church received the word of God through tradition — either directly from prominent individuals who were inspired and still living (for it was common in those early days, before there was a written word, for God to reveal Himself to prominent people directly, as appears in Job and in many passages of Genesis), or by tradition passed down from earlier generations. This oral transmission was reasonably reliable in earlier ages because people lived so long. Noah could converse with Adam and receive traditions directly from him. Noah lived until roughly Abraham's time. And the sons of Jacob lived long enough to pass on the revelations given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to their descendants in Egypt. But by this time, the distance from the beginning was so great, human lifespans had been reduced to their current length around Moses's time, and God had now set apart a nation as His own people — partly for the purpose of being keepers of His oracles. God therefore saw it necessary and fitting to commit His word to writing, to stand as a reliable standard for all ages to come. So in addition to the book of Job, Christ wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with His own finger. After this, the entire law — containing the substance of the five books of Moses — was by God's special command committed to writing. It was called "the Book of the Law" and was placed in the tabernacle to be kept there for the use of the church, as Deuteronomy 31:24-26 shows.

6. God was pleased now to wonderfully represent the journey of His redeemed church through the world to their eternal inheritance through the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. Every stage of the church's redemption by Christ — from beginning to its completion in glory — was portrayed there. The state from which they are redeemed was represented by Egypt and their bondage there. The purchase of their redemption was represented by the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, offered on the night God struck down all the firstborn of Egypt. The beginning of the application of Christ's redemption to the church — their conversion — was represented by Israel's departure from Egypt and their passing through the Red Sea in so extraordinary and miraculous a manner. The church's journey through this evil world, and the various changes she passes through in its different stages, was represented by the Israelites' travels through the wilderness. The manner of their being led by Christ was represented by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The manner in which the church is sustained and supplied from beginning to end with spiritual nourishment and daily communication from God was represented by God's providing the children of Israel with bread — manna from heaven — and water from the rock. The dangers the saints face on their journey through the world were represented by the poisonous snakes the children of Israel encountered in the wilderness. The conflicts of the church with her enemies were represented by their battles with the Amalekites and others they fought in the wilderness. Countless other parallels could be mentioned in which the events of that journey were vivid pictures of what the church and individual believers experience in every age. That these things are types of what

pertains to the Christian church is made clear by 1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The apostle is speaking of the very events we have just mentioned, and he expressly says they happened to them as types — that is the word in the original.

7. Another thing that must not be overlooked here is a remarkable act of providence affecting all of mankind, completed during this period — the shortening of human lifespan from nearly nine hundred to a thousand years down to about seventy or eighty. The shortening began immediately after the flood. The first generation after the flood lived to about 600 years; the next to between 400 and 500; and human life gradually grew shorter and shorter until around the time of the great plague that struck the congregation of Israel after they had complained at the report of the spies and their bodies fell in the wilderness — when all the men of war died. At that point human lifespan was reduced to its current standard, as Moses observes in the psalm he wrote on the occasion of that event, Psalm 90:10: "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away."

This great act of God served to advance the grand design of Christ's redemption. The brevity of human life in this world prepared the way for poor, mortal, short-lived men to more joyfully receive the good news of everlasting life in another world — brought to light through the Gospel — and to more readily embrace a Savior who purchases and offers such a blessing. If people still commonly lived to about nine hundred years, how much less would move them to pay attention to the offer of a future life. How

much greater would be their temptation to be content with the things of this world — things which, lasting so long, would naturally crowd out any thought of another life. This probably contributed greatly to the wickedness of those who lived before the flood. But now, how much stronger are people's motives to seek redemption and a better life through the great Redeemer — since human life is not one twelfth of what it once was, and people now universally die at an age when men formerly were just beginning their lives.

8. The same work was carried on in God's preserving the people from whom Christ was to come from perishing in the wilderness — an uninterrupted miracle spanning forty years. I have noted many times how God wonderfully preserved those from whom the Redeemer would come: He preserved Noah and his family from the flood; He preserved Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with their families from the wicked inhabitants of Canaan; He preserved Jacob and his family from perishing in the famine, through Joseph in Egypt. But this preservation of the children of Israel for so long in the wilderness was in some ways more remarkable than all of these — for it was a continuous miracle of such long duration. There were, by reasonable estimate, at first two million souls in that assembly, who had the same physical need for food and water as any other people. Had these been withheld, they would all have perished — every man, woman, and child — within less than a month, with not one survivor. Yet this vast multitude survived for forty years in a dry, barren wilderness, without planting or harvesting or farming any land. Bread was rained down to them from heaven daily, water was provided to satisfy them all from a rock, and the clothing they brought out of Egypt did not wear out

throughout that entire time. There was never another example like this of an entire nation being sustained in this way for so long. So God upheld His church by a continuous miracle and kept alive the people in whom was the blessing — the promised seed, the great Redeemer of the world.

9. During the time Israel was in the wilderness, God was pleased to give a fuller revelation of Christ the Redeemer through prophecy than had ever been given before. Three prophecies given at this time are worth noting. The first is Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17-19: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, while Israel performs valiantly. One from Jacob shall have dominion, and will destroy the remnant from the city." This is a clearer prophecy of Christ — especially regarding His kingly office — than anything that had come before. But there is another that God gave through Moses, clearer still, especially regarding His prophetic office, in Deuteronomy 18:18: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him," etc. This is a clearer prophecy of Christ than any before it in this respect: all previous prophecies of Christ had been in figurative and symbolic language. The first prophecy — that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head — was such. The promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that "in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" were also symbolic — and less specific, because the phrase "your seed" is general and not plainly limited to one particular person. Jacob's prophecy

in blessing Judah (Genesis 49:8) is in symbolic language, as is Balaam's, which refers to Christ under the figurative expression of "a star." But this Mosaic prophecy is plain, with no symbolic veil at all.

This prophecy of Christ contains several important elements. It describes His mediatorial office in general, in verse 16 — revealing that He would be a person standing between the people and God, who is so awe-inspiring in His majesty, holiness, and justice that they could not approach Him directly or have fellowship with Him without a mediator standing between them. For if they came directly to a God of such terrible power against sin, they would die — God would be a consuming fire to them. It then gives a specific revelation of Christ with respect to His prophetic office: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you," etc. Further, it reveals what kind of prophet He would be — a prophet like Moses. Moses was the leader and head of all the people, who under God had been their deliverer from bondage, their shepherd through the Red Sea and the wilderness, their intercessor before God, and who held both a prophetic and kingly role among them. For Moses exercised the authority of a king over them. Deuteronomy 33:5 says he was king in Jeshurun, and he was the prophet through whom God built up His church and gave instructions for worship. So Christ was to be a prophet like Moses — making this the clearest and fullest prophecy of Christ given from the beginning of the world up to this time.

The next prophecy to note concerns only the calling of the Gentiles that would follow Christ's coming — a very plain prophecy that God gave through Moses in the wilderness, in Deuteronomy 32:21. Here is a clear prophecy of the rejection of the Jews and the

calling of the Gentiles. The people had provoked God to jealousy by turning from Him to what was no god — by casting Him off and taking other gods, which are no gods, in His place. So God declares He will provoke them to jealousy in the same way — by casting them off and taking another people, who had not been His people, in their place. The apostle Paul points to this prophecy as foretelling the calling of the Gentiles in Romans 10:19-20: "But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you.' And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'"

So we see how the light of the Gospel — which first began to dawn and glimmer immediately after the fall — has been steadily growing brighter as we draw nearer to the time of Christ.

10. Another way God carried on His work during this period was through a remarkable outpouring of His Spirit on the younger generation in the wilderness. The generation that had grown up when they came out of Egypt — those twenty years old and older — was a very stubborn and rebellious generation. They had been shaped by the idolatry and wickedness of Egypt and were not weaned from it, as the prophet Ezekiel notes in Ezekiel 20:6-8. This is why they made the golden calf in imitation of Egypt's idol worship, which centered on the bull or ox — which is why cattle are called "the abomination of the Egyptians," that is, their idol. God was deeply angry with this generation and swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest. But the younger generation was different — those under twenty when they came out of Egypt, and those born in the wilderness, the generation spoken of in Numbers

14:31: "Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey — I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected." This was the generation with whom the covenant was renewed, as recorded in Deuteronomy, and who entered the land of Canaan. God was pleased to make this generation a people to His praise, and they were marked by exceptional godliness — as many Scripture passages show. In particular, Jeremiah 2:2 says, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of His harvest." The generation that followed God in the wilderness is here spoken of with the highest praise for holiness: Israel was holy to the Lord and the firstfruits of His harvest. Their love for God is described as being as intense as the love of a bride at her wedding. The following God in the wilderness spoken of here is not the going out of Egypt into the wilderness of Sinai, but their following God through that terrible wilderness after they turned back from Kadesh-barnea — described in Deuteronomy 8:15: "who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water." Though this generation faced far greater trials than their parents had faced before reaching Kadesh-barnea, they never once complained against God as their parents had done. Instead, their trials had the opposite effect — awakening them, convicting them, humbling them, and preparing them for great mercy. They were shaken by those terrible judgments God brought on their parents, whose bodies fell in the wilderness. God poured out His Spirit through those sobering acts of judgment against their parents, through their own journey in the wilderness, and through the word

preached to them by Moses. Through this, many of them were deeply convicted, made to see the wickedness of their own hearts, were humbled, and eventually were savingly converted. Deuteronomy 8:2-3 says, "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you..." And verse 15 says, "who led you through the great and terrible wilderness... that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end." So Hosea 13:5 says, "I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought." God drew them in and brought them into that wilderness and spoke tenderly to them — as was later foretold in Hosea 2:14.

The terrible judgments that fell on the congregation after they turned back from Kadesh-barnea — in the matter of Korah, and in the matter of Peor — were chiefly aimed at the older generation, whom God was consuming in the wilderness. Those rebellions were led mainly by the elders of the congregation, who belonged to the older generation that God had given over to their own desires. They walked according to their own counsel, and God was grieved by their behavior for forty years in the wilderness.

That this younger generation was marked by exceptional godliness is evident throughout their history. The former generation had been wicked and was followed by curses; this generation was holy and was followed by wonderful blessings. God did great things for them — He fought for them and gave them possession of Canaan. It is God's custom, when He has great mercies to bestow on a visible people, to first prepare them for those mercies and then to give them. So it was here: they trusted in God and through

Him defeated Sihon and Og and the giants of Canaan, and they are commended for holding fast to the Lord. Joshua 23:8 records Joshua saying to them, "But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day." And so Israel did throughout the lifetime of that generation. But when Joshua and all that generation had died, there arose another generation that did not know the Lord. This godly generation showed a commendable and fervent zeal for God on several occasions — in the matter of Achan's sin, and especially when they suspected that the two and a half tribes had set up an altar in opposition to the altar of burnt offering. There has never been a generation of Israel of whom so much good and so little evil is recorded. It is also worth noting that during this generation the second general circumcision took place, by which the reproach of Israel was completely removed and they were made clean. And when they were later defiled through Achan, they purified themselves again.

With the men of the former generation dead and God having set this younger generation apart for Himself, He solemnly renewed His covenant with them, as described in detail in Deuteronomy 29. Such solemn renewals of the covenant typically accompanied remarkable outpourings of the Spirit that produced widespread spiritual renewal — as we see in the times of Hezekiah and Josiah. It is questionable whether there was ever a time of such flourishing religion in the Israelite church as in that generation. Just as the Christian church was in its most vibrant state in the days of its founding — the apostolic era — so it appears the Jewish church was at its most vibrant in the days of its first establishment under Moses and Joshua.

So at this time God gloriously advanced the work of redemption, both through His word and His Spirit. This outpouring of the Spirit promoted the work of redemption not only as a glorious instance of that redemption being applied, but also as the means God used to establish the church of Israel well from its very beginning — when it was first settled in the proper observance of God's ordinances in Canaan. This parallels the outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning of the Christian church, which was a major means God used to establish the Christian church firmly for all succeeding ages.

11. The next thing to note is God's bringing the people of Israel under Joshua's leadership and settling them in the land where Christ was to be born — the great picture of the heavenly Canaan that Christ has purchased. This was accomplished by Joshua, who was from the line of Joseph and was a prominent type of Christ. This is why he is called "the shepherd, the stone of Israel" in Jacob's blessing of Joseph in Genesis 49:24. Being such a type of Christ, Joshua bore the name of Christ. Joshua and Jesus are the same name — one Hebrew, the other Greek. This is why, in the New Testament — which was originally written in Greek — Joshua is called Jesus. Acts 7:45 says, "which also our fathers brought in with Jesus" — meaning Joshua. Hebrews 4:8 says, "For if Jesus had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day" — meaning if Joshua had given them rest.

God wonderfully gave His people this land by conquering its former inhabitants and the mighty giants — as Christ would conquer the devil. He first defeated the great kings east of the Jordan — Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan. Then He parted the Jordan River, as He had parted the Red Sea before. He

caused the walls of Jericho to fall at the sound of the priests' trumpets — that sound typifying the sound of the Gospel through the preaching of ministers, and the walls of the accursed city Jericho representing the walls of Satan's kingdom. After this He miraculously destroyed the mighty army of the Amorites under the five kings, causing the sun and moon to stand still to help the people against their enemies at the prayer of Joshua — the type of Jesus. This clearly showed that God would make the entire course of nature serve the work of redemption, so that all things would yield to that work's purposes and give way to the welfare of God's redeemed people.

So Christ displayed His great love for His elect — that He would bend the very course of nature, in the world He had made and governed, to serve their happiness and safety. He showed that the sun and moon and all things, visible and invisible, were theirs by His purchase. At the same time, Christ fought as the Captain of their armies and hurled great hailstones on their enemies, by which more were killed than by the sword of the children of Israel. After this, Christ gave the people a mighty victory over an even larger army in the northern part of the land — one gathered at the waters of Merom, "as numerous as the sand on the seashore," as Joshua 11:4 says.

So God gave the people from whom Christ was to come the land where He would be born, live, preach, work miracles, die, rise again, and from which He would ascend into heaven — the land that was a great type of heaven. This was another significant advance in the work of redemption.

12. Another thing God did to advance this work was the actual establishment of His appointed worship among the people, as it had been instituted in the wilderness. This worship had been ordered at Mount Sinai entirely in service of the great work of redemption. It was designed to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, and its countless ceremonial observances were types of Him and His redemption. This worship was mainly instituted at Mount Sinai but was set up in practice gradually. It was partly established in the wilderness, where the tabernacle and its furnishings were made — but many parts of the appointed worship could not be observed in the wilderness due to their unsettled, traveling condition. And many commands specifically concerned the land of Canaan and their settled towns and homes, so they could not be carried out until the people arrived there. But now, when this had come to pass, God set up His tabernacle in the midst of His people, as He had promised in Leviticus 26:11: "I will also place My dwelling in your midst." The tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), the priests and Levites received their appointed duties, the cities of refuge were designated, and the people were now able to observe their feasts of firstfruits and the feast of harvest and to bring all their tithes and appointed offerings to the Lord. Most elements of God's worship were now established, though some aspects were not put into practice until later.

13. The next thing to note was God's remarkable preservation of the people whenever all the males went up three times a year to the place where God's ark was. The people of Israel were generally surrounded by enemies who sought every opportunity to destroy them and take their land. Until David's time, there were still many within the land — the remaining Canaanites and other former in-

habitants — who were fierce enemies of Israel. These people had, three times every year, a clear opportunity to overrun the country and seize its cities, while all the men were away and only the women and those unable to travel were left behind. Yet they were remarkably preserved at these times throughout all generations, in keeping with the promise God had made in Exodus 34:24: "No man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the Lord your God." God so ordered events and so governed the hearts of their enemies that — though those enemies were so full of hatred toward Israel, so eager to drive them from the land, and had such an open opportunity in their hands year after year, with the whole country left undefended and unresisted, practically inviting them to come and take it — we never once read in the entire biblical history of any enemy ever taking these opportunities against them. This could only have been a continuous miracle by which God, for the preservation of His church, maintained His protection over many generations throughout the entire Old Testament era. It was surely a remarkable act of divine providence, maintaining and advancing God's great design of redemption.

14. God preserved His church and true religion from being entirely extinguished through the repeated apostasies of the Israelites during the period of the judges. How prone that people was to forsake the true God — who had done such wonders for them — and to fall into idolatry! Again and again the land seemed nearly overwhelmed by idolatry. Yet God never allowed His true worship to be completely destroyed. The tabernacle stood. The ark was preserved. The book of the law was kept from being destroyed. God's priesthood was maintained, and God still had a church among the people. Time after time, when true religion seemed

nearly gone and had come to the last extremity, God granted a revival — sending an angel or prophet, or raising up some prominent person to serve as an instrument of reformation.

15. God preserved the nation from destruction and delivered them again and again, even though they were so often brought under the power of their enemies. It is remarkable not only that true religion was not completely rooted out and the church destroyed, but also that the very nation in which that church existed was not utterly wiped out. They were brought under enemy power so often. At one time they were subdued by Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; at another they came under the Moabites; then they were sold into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan; then they came under the Midianites; then they were severely oppressed by the Ammonites; and then by the Philistines. Yet in all these dangers God preserved them and kept them from being completely overthrown. Each time they came to the brink of ruin, God raised up a deliverer, in keeping with Deuteronomy 32:36: "For the Lord will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free."

These remarkable acts of providence are vividly and powerfully described by the psalmist in Psalm 106:34 and following.

The deliverers God raised up from time to time were all types of Christ, the great Redeemer and Deliverer of His church. Some were especially striking types — in particular Barak, Jephthah, Gideon, and Samson, in many details. Above all, the acts of Samson provided a remarkably detailed picture of Christ, as could be shown if time permitted.

16. It is notable that when Christ appeared to manage the affairs of His church during this period, He often appeared in the form of the human nature He would take in His incarnation. He appears to have appeared to Moses repeatedly in this way — particularly at the time when God spoke with him face to face, as a man speaks to a friend, and Moses saw the form of the Lord (Numbers 12:8), after Moses had asked God to show him His glory. This was the most remarkable vision Moses ever had of Christ. Moses received a twofold revelation of Christ. One was spiritual — made to his mind through the proclamation of God's name, when He declared, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations" (Exodus 34:6 and following). The other was an outward vision — what Moses saw when Christ passed by, placed him in the cleft of the rock, and covered him with His hand, so that Moses saw His back. What Moses saw was undoubtedly the back of a glorious human form in which Christ appeared to him — in all likelihood the form of His glorified human nature as it would afterward appear. He did not see His face, for no one could survive a direct view of the glory of Christ's human nature as it now appears.

Christ also appeared in human form to the seventy elders, as recorded in Exodus 24:9-11: "Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch

out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank." Christ afterward appeared to Joshua in human form as well. Joshua 5:13-14 records, "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' He said, 'No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord.'" So He appeared to Gideon in Judges 6:11 and following, and to Manoah in Judges 13:17-21. In the appearance to Manoah, Christ presented a picture of both His incarnation and His death. His incarnation was represented by His appearing in human form; His death and sufferings were represented by the sacrifice of a young goat and by His ascending in the flame of the sacrifice — signifying that He was the great sacrifice to be offered to God as a pleasing aroma, in the fire of God's wrath, as that goat was consumed and rose in the flame. Christ appeared in this way — time after time in the form of the nature He would afterward take — because He was appearing for the same purpose and to carry on the same work that He would come in that nature to accomplish.

17. Another thing to note from this period in the work of redemption is the beginning of an established succession of prophets and the founding of a school of the prophets in Samuel's time. The spirit of prophecy was present in Israel after Moses and before Samuel. Joshua and many of the judges had some degree of it. Deborah was a prophetess, and some of the high priests were gifted with this spirit — particularly Eli. That period was not entirely without people specifically appointed by God to the office of prophet. We read of such a one in Judges 6:8: "The Lord sent a

prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them," etc. Such a person appears to be the one mentioned in 1 Samuel 2:27: "A man of God came to Eli," etc.

But there was no established and continuous order of prophets in Israel before Samuel. This gap is noted in 1 Samuel 3:1: "Now the word of the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent." But with Samuel began a succession of prophets that continued uninterrupted — or nearly so — from that time until the spirit of prophecy ceased around the time of Malachi. This is why Samuel is spoken of in the New Testament as the beginning of this succession of prophets. Acts 3:24 says, "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days." After Samuel came Nathan, Gad, Iddo, Heman, Asaph, and others. Then toward the end of Solomon's reign we read of Ahijah, and in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam there were prophets, and so one prophet succeeded another continually until the captivity. The writings of those prophets included in the biblical canon show that prophets were a recognized and ongoing order of men in the land during those days. During the captivity there were still prophets — Ezekiel and Daniel. And after the captivity there were prophets as well — Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi.

Because God intended a continuous succession of prophets from Samuel's time onward, He established in Samuel's day a school of the prophets — a school for young men who were trained under a great prophet, who served as their master and teacher in the study of divine things and the practice of holiness, preparing them for the office as God would call them to it. These young men who belonged to these schools were called "the sons of the

prophets," and they are sometimes simply called "prophets." At first these students were under Samuel's supervision. 1 Samuel 19:20 records, "And when they saw the company of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them." The company of prophets mentioned in 1 Samuel 10:5 was the same group. Later we read of them being under Elijah. Elisha was one of his students, but he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit — as his successor, as a firstborn son typically received a double share of the father's estate. When the sons of the prophets saw that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, they submitted to him and acknowledged him as their master, as they had acknowledged Elijah before. 2 Kings 2:15 records, "Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him."

After this Elisha was their master and teacher, caring for them and instructing them. 2 Kings 4:38 records, "When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, 'Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.'" In Elijah's and Elisha's time, companies of these sons of the prophets were resident in several locations — one at Bethel, another at Jericho, another at Gilgal (unless the groups at Gilgal and Jericho were one). The place called "the college" where the prophetess Huldah lived may have been another such community at Jerusalem, as 2 Kings 22:14 says that Huldah the prophetess "lived in Jerusalem in the second district." They had houses where they lived together.

When the group at Jericho had grown so large their house was too small, they asked their master and teacher Elisha for permission to go cut timber to build a larger one, as 2 Kings 6:1-2 describes.

At times there were considerable numbers of these sons of the prophets in Israel. When Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in groups of fifty in a cave (1 Kings 18:4).

These schools of the prophets, established by Samuel and later maintained by great prophets like Elijah and Elisha, were of divine appointment. Accordingly, the sons of the prophets were often given a degree of inspiration while they were students in these schools. And when God called someone to the ongoing exercise of the prophetic office and to some extraordinary task, He ordinarily took them from these schools — though not always. The prophet Amos, when speaking of his own call to the prophetic office, notes that he had not been educated in the schools of the prophets and was not one of the sons of the prophets (Amos 7:14-15). The very fact that Amos found it remarkable that someone without training in the schools of the prophets should be called as a prophet shows that God's ordinary practice was to call His prophets from these schools — for in doing so He was simply blessing His own institution.

So this remarkable act of providence — God's establishing a continuous succession of prophets beginning with Samuel's time, lasting for many ages, and for that purpose founding a school of the prophets under Samuel to be continued in Israel — was a step God took in the great work of redemption. For the chief purpose of this succession of prophets was to foretell Christ and the glorious redemption He was to accomplish, and so to prepare the way for

His coming. This is clear from the previously mentioned Acts 3:24, and from Acts 10:43: "Of Him all the prophets bear witness." And Acts 3:18: "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled."

As noted before, the Old Testament era was like the nighttime — the church was not completely without light, but it did not have the direct light of the sun. Instead it had light reflected from the stars. These prophets were the stars that reflected the light of the sun. And so they spoke abundantly of Jesus Christ, as their preserved writings make clear. It was very much their work — both in their schools and elsewhere — to study and seek to understand the work of redemption. This is what the apostle Peter says of them in 1 Peter 1:10-11: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." We are told that the church of the Redeemer is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with the Redeemer Himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

This was the first thing of this kind ever done in the world, and it was a major step God took in advancing this great work of redemption. There had been occasional prophecies of Christ before, as was shown. But now, as the time of the Redeemer's coming drew nearer, God was pleased to appoint a specific order of men in continuous succession — whose main task would be to foretell Christ and His redemption and to prepare the way for His coming as His forerunners. God established schools where large numbers

were trained and prepared for this purpose. Revelation 19:10 says, "I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

PART 5. FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY



I now come to the fifth period of Old Testament history, beginning with David and extending to the Babylonian captivity. I will show how the work of redemption was carried on through this period as well. Here,

I. The first thing to note is God's anointing the person who was to be the ancestor of Christ to be king over His people. The acts of providence noted through the previous period — from Moses to this point — concerned the people from whom Christ would come. But now the biblical narrative leads us to consider God's providence toward the particular individual from whom Christ was to come, namely David. At this time God was pleased to single out that person from whom Christ would come, choosing him from among all the thousands of Israel and placing a most honorable mark of distinction on him by anointing him to be king over His people. Only God could have found him. His father's household was considered insignificant in Israel, he was the youngest of all his father's sons, and he was the last person Samuel expected God to have chosen. God had previously, in earlier ages, remarkably distinguished the specific persons from whom Christ would come

— as He did with Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the last time God had clearly singled out the individual from whom Christ was to come was in Jacob's blessing of his son Judah — unless we count Nahshon's elevation in the wilderness as the leader of the tribe of Judah. But this honoring of the person from whom Christ would come — in David's case — was particularly honorable, for it was God's anointing him to be king over His people. There was something more signified in David's anointing than in Saul's. God anointed Saul personally to be king. But in sending Samuel to anoint David, God intended something further — to establish the crown of Israel in David and in his family for as long as Israel remained a kingdom. And infinitely more than that: to establish the crown over His universal church, His spiritual Israel, in David's seed, to the end of the world and throughout all eternity.

This was a major act of God — a great step taken toward further advancing the work of redemption, as the time of Christ's coming drew nearer. David, as the ancestor of Christ, was also the greatest personal type of Christ in all of the Old Testament. The types of Christ were of three kinds: instituted types, providential types, and personal types. The ordinance of sacrifice was the greatest of the instituted types; the redemption out of Egypt was the greatest of the providential types; and David was the greatest of the personal types. This is why Christ is frequently called David in the biblical prophecies, as in Ezekiel 34:23-24: "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them... My servant David will be prince among them." And so in many other places. And He is very often called the seed of David and the Son of David.

Since David was the ancestor and great type of Christ, his being solemnly anointed by God to be king over His people — so that the kingdom of His church might continue in his family forever — can in some respects be seen as an anointing of Christ Himself. Christ was, as it were, anointed in him. Therefore, Christ's anointing and David's are spoken of together in Scripture, as in Psalm 89:20: "I have found David My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him." And David's throne and Christ's are spoken of as one. Luke 1:32 says, "and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David." Acts 2:30 says that David, "knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne," was speaking prophetically of Christ. So God's establishing the kingdom of His church in the house of David was, as it were, a new founding of the kingdom of Christ — the beginning of it in the visible and enduring form it would take from then on. It was as if God was planting the root from which that branch of righteousness would later grow — the everlasting King of His church. That is why this everlasting King is called the branch from the stem of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1 says, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." Jeremiah 23:5 says, "Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely.'" Jeremiah 33:15 says, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth." And in the New Testament Christ is called "the root and the descendant of David" in Revelation 22:16.

It is notable that God anointed David to reign in Saul's place. He took the crown from Saul and his family — who was taller than any of his people and seemed in their eyes best suited to rule — and gave it to David, who was shorter and by comparison seemed an unlikely choice. In this God showed how Christ — who appeared without impressive form or beauty, and who was despised and rejected by men — would take the kingdom from the great ones of the earth. It is also notable that David was the youngest of Jesse's sons — just as Jacob the younger brother supplanted Esau and obtained the birthright and blessing from him; as Perez, another of Christ's ancestors, pushed past his brother Zerah at birth; and as Isaac, another of Christ's ancestors, displaced his older brother Ishmael. In all of this was fulfilled that frequent saying of Christ, "The last shall be first, and the first last."

II. The next thing to observe is how God preserved David's life through a series of remarkable providences until Saul's death. I have previously noted the wonderful preservation of other individual ancestors of Christ — Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob — and observed how, since Christ the great Redeemer was to come from them, the work of redemption itself, and with it the entire church redeemed through Him, can be seen as preserved from being destroyed in their preservation. But the preservation of David was no less remarkable than any of those already discussed. How often was it the case that only a step separated him from death. The first instance came when he encountered a lion and a bear that had seized a lamb from his flock. Without miraculous help, either animal could have torn this young shepherd to pieces just as they could have torn the lamb. In this way, the future root and offspring of David was preserved from that roaring lion who goes about

seeking whom he may devour — and in time would conquer him and rescue the poor souls of men who were like lambs in his jaws. Another remarkable instance was his preservation from the giant Goliath, who was strong enough to have seized him and torn him apart with his hands, and given his flesh to the birds and wild animals, as he threatened. But God preserved David and gave him victory, so that he cut off Goliath's head with his own sword and became the deliverer of his people — just as Christ slew the spiritual Goliath with his own weapon, the cross, and so delivered His people. And how remarkably did God preserve David from being killed by Saul — when Saul first sought his life by giving him his daughter as a trap, requiring David to pay for her with one hundred Philistine foreskins in hope that the Philistines would kill him; and preserving him again when Saul told Jonathan and all his servants to kill David; and moving Jonathan, instead of killing him as his father commanded, to love him as his own soul and to be a key instrument of his preservation, even risking his own life to protect David — though one might have expected Jonathan, of all people, to want David dead since David was his competitor for the throne. God preserved David again when Saul hurled a spear at him to pin him to the wall; and again when Saul sent messengers to his house to watch him, when Michal, Saul's daughter, let him down through a window; and when Saul sent messengers to Naioth in Ramah again and again to capture him, and they were repeatedly stopped by sudden miraculous outpourings of the Spirit of God; and then when Saul, determined in the matter, went himself — he too was overcome among the prophets. And after all this, how wonderfully was David's life preserved at Gath among the Philistines, when he went to Achish king of Gath and was in Philistine hands — people

who, one would have thought, would have killed him immediately, since he had provoked them so greatly through his exploits against them. He was again wonderfully preserved at Keilah, after entering a town where Saul thought he had him trapped. How wonderfully was he preserved from Saul who hunted him in the mountains. How remarkably did God deliver him in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul and his army were closing in around David. And how he was delivered in the cave of En-gedi — when, instead of Saul killing David, God delivered Saul into his hands in the cave, and David cut off his garment and could as easily have cut off his head. And afterward delivering him similarly in the wilderness of Ziph. And preserving him again in the land of the Philistines — though David had fought and defeated the Philistines at Keilah since he was last among them, which one would have thought warning enough never to trust him or let him escape again if they ever had him in their hands. Yet when a second opportunity came, God remarkably turned their hearts to be his friends and protectors rather than his destroyers.

So the precious seed that contained, as it were, the Redeemer and all the blessings of His redemption was wonderfully preserved while both hell and earth were conspiring to destroy it. How often does David himself note this with praise and wonder in the book of Psalms!

III. Around this time the written word of God — the canon of Scripture — was added to by Samuel. I noted earlier how the canon of Scripture was begun and the first written word of God, the first written standard of faith and conduct ever given, was given to the church around the time of Moses. Many scholars — perhaps most — believe it was added to by Joshua, who wrote the last chapter of

Deuteronomy and most of the book of Joshua. Others think that Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and part of the first book of Samuel were written by Samuel. Whatever the case, we have good evidence that Samuel added to the canon of Scripture. Samuel is clearly mentioned in the New Testament as one of the prophets whose writings we have in Scripture, in the previously cited Acts 3:24: "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days." The phrase "as many as have spoken" cannot mean those who spoke by word of mouth, since every prophet did that. The meaning must be those who have spoken in writing — those whose words have been preserved so that we can see what they said.

The way Samuel spoke of the times of Christ and the Gospel was by recording the history of the things that pointed to and pictured them — particularly the things concerning David that he wrote. The Spirit of God moved him to commit those things to writing chiefly because they pointed to Christ and the times of the Gospel. As stated before, this was the main purpose of the entire succession of prophets that began with Samuel — to foretell those times.

That Samuel added to the canon of Scripture also appears to be supported by 1 Chronicles 29:29: "Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer."

Whether or not the book of Joshua was written by Samuel, it is the general view of scholars that the books of Judges, Ruth, and part of the first book of Samuel were composed by him. The book of Ruth was written for this reason: though it appears to deal with private family matters, the people chiefly described in it were from the family that produced both David and Christ, and it therefore

pointed to what the apostle Peter said about Samuel and the other prophets in Acts 3. This addition to the canon of Scripture — the great and chief instrument for applying redemption — is to be understood as a further carrying on of that work, and as a new addition to the great building.

4. Another thing God did toward this work at that time was His inspiring David to portray Christ and His redemption in sacred songs — songs that were to serve the church in public worship throughout all ages. David himself was endowed with the spirit of prophecy. He is called a prophet in Acts 2:29-30: "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath..." etc. In this David was a type of Christ — being both a prophet and a king. We do not know the exact time when David first received the spirit of prophecy, but it is clear that it was either at the time Samuel anointed him or very shortly afterward — for he appears to have been moved by this spirit soon after, in the encounter with Goliath. And a large part of the Psalms was written during his years of trouble before he came to the throne, as can be shown from a careful examination of the individual psalms.

The oil used in anointing David was a picture of the Spirit of God, and the picture and the reality were given together, as 1 Samuel 16:13 records: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." It is probable that the Spirit came upon him at that time in His prophetic influences.

The way this Spirit influenced him was by inspiring him to portray Christ and the glorious things of His redemption in sacred songs — songs that beautifully expressed the longings of a godly soul, filled with wonder at the glorious things of the Redeemer, inflamed with divine love, and overflowing with praise. This is why David is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel" in 2 Samuel 23:1: "Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, the man who was raised on high declares, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel." The main subjects of these sacred songs were the glorious things of the Gospel — as is evident from the way they are quoted and applied throughout the New Testament. No other book of the Old Testament is cited more frequently in the New Testament than the Psalms. This holy man joyfully sang of those great things of Christ's redemption that had been the hope and expectation of God's church since the beginning of the church on earth. Others joined him in this with equal joy — Asaph, Heman, Ethan, and others — for the book of Psalms was not all written by David, though the greater part of it was. Through this the canon of Scripture was further enlarged, and an excellent portion of divine Scripture it was that was added.

This was a great advance that God made in this building. The light of the Gospel, which had been gradually growing since the fall, was enormously increased by it. Before this, there had been only scattered prophecies of Christ given across long stretches of time. Now Christ was spoken of by His ancestor David abundantly, in multitudes of songs covering His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven; His atonement and intercession; His prophetic, kingly, and priestly offices; His glorious benefits in this life and the next; His union with the church and the

blessedness of the church in Him; the calling of the Gentiles; the future glory of the church near the end of the world; and Christ's coming to final judgment. All these things and many more concerning Christ and His redemption are abundantly covered in the book of Psalms.

This was also a glorious advance in the work of redemption because God here gave His church a book of sacred songs for use in the part of their public worship that involves singing His praises — and this for all ages to the end of the world. It is clear that the book of Psalms was given by God for this purpose. It was used in the church of Israel by God's appointment, as the titles of many psalms show — inscribed to the chief musician, meaning the person appointed to lead the singing in the temple during Israel's public worship. So David is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel" because he composed psalms for the use of the church of Israel. And we have evidence they were actually used in the church of Israel for that purpose long after David was dead, as 2 Chronicles 29:30 shows: "Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer." And we find the same psalms appointed in the New Testament for use in the Christian church in worship. Ephesians 5:19 says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Colossians 3:16 says, "teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." And so they have been used, and will to the end of the world be used, in the church to celebrate the praises of God. God's people had sometimes worshiped God in song before this — as they did at the Red Sea. They had Moses's prophetic song in

Deuteronomy 32 given to them. Deborah and Barak and Hannah sang praises to God. But now for the first time God gave His church a book of sacred songs for their regular use.

5. The next thing to note is God's actually placing David on the throne of Israel, despite all the opposition that stood in the way. God was determined to accomplish it, and He made every obstacle give way. He removed Saul and his sons; first established David over the tribe of Judah; and then, after removing Ishbosheth, established him over all Israel. So God fulfilled His word to David. He took him from the sheepfold and made him king over His people Israel, as Psalm 78:70-71 records. And now the throne of Israel was established in that family in which it was to remain forever — forever and ever.

6. This was also the first time God proceeded to choose a particular city from all the tribes of Israel to place His name there. The law of Moses refers several times to the children of Israel bringing their offerings to the place that God would choose — as in Deuteronomy 12:5-7 and many other places — but God had not yet done so until now. The tabernacle and ark had never been permanently fixed but moved from place to place. Now God proceeded to choose Jerusalem. Jerusalem had never been fully conquered or taken from the Jebusites before David's time. Joshua 15:63 says, "Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day." But now David fully conquered it, as 2 Samuel 5 records. God then proceeded to choose that city to place His name there, as is clear from David's bringing the ark there shortly afterward. This is later referred to as the first time God chose a city to place His name there, as 2 Chronicles 6:5-

6 and 12:13 show. Afterward God showed David the specific site where the temple was to be built — the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

This city of Jerusalem is therefore called the holy city, and it was the greatest type of the church of Christ in all the Old Testament. It was redeemed by David, the commander of Israel's armies, from the hands of the Jebusites to be God's city — the holy place of His rest forever, where He would dwell. So Christ, the captain of His people's salvation, redeems His church from the hands of the devil, to be His holy and beloved city. This is why Scripture so often calls the church of Christ's redemption by the names Zion and Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city God appointed as the location of the first gathering and forming of the Christian church after Christ's resurrection — the site of that remarkable outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles and early Christians, and the place from which the Gospel was to sound forth to all the world. It was the site of the first Christian church, which was to be, as it were, the mother of all churches throughout the world, in keeping with Isaiah 2:3-4: "For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples."

So God chose Mount Zion to be the source from which the Gospel would sound forth, just as the law had gone forth from Mount Sinai.

7. The next thing to observe is God's solemnly renewing the covenant of grace with David and promising that the Messiah would be of his seed. This is recorded in 2 Samuel 7. It happened because of the thoughts David had about building a house for God. On this occasion God sent the prophet Nathan to David with the

glorious promises of the covenant of grace. The heart of the message is in verse 16: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." This promise refers to Christ, the seed of David, and is fulfilled in Him alone — for the kingdom of David has long since ceased to exist except as it is sustained in Christ. The earthly kingdom of the house of David has now been gone for many ages — far longer than it ever stood.

That this covenant God established with David through the prophet Nathan was the covenant of grace is clearly shown by Scripture itself in Isaiah 55:1-3. There Christ invites sinners to come to the waters, etc. In verse 3 He says, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David." Here Christ offers poor sinners, if they will come to Him, a share in the same everlasting covenant He made with David, conveying to them the same faithful mercies. But what is the covenant that sinners obtain a share in when they come to Christ, if not the covenant of grace?

This was the fifth solemn confirmation of the covenant of grace with the church since the fall. The covenant of grace had been present and confirmed all along. But there had been particular occasions when God had solemnly renewed this covenant with His church — giving a new presentation and confirmation of it, revealing it in a new way. This was now the fifth such solemn confirmation. The first was with Adam, the second with Noah, the third with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fourth through Moses in the wilderness, and now the fifth was this covenant made with David.

David always regarded this establishment of the covenant of grace with him as the greatest expression of God's favor — the highest honor God had ever shown him. He prized and rejoiced in it above all the other blessings of his reign. His joyful and thankful reception of it, when Nathan came to him with this glorious message, is evident in 2 Samuel 7:18 and following. And in his final words, David declares this to be all his salvation and all his desire, as 2 Samuel 23:5 shows: "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow?"

8. It was through David that God first gave His people Israel full possession of the entire promised land. I showed earlier how God's giving Israel the promised land belonged to the covenant of grace. Joshua had accomplished this in large measure, but not fully. Joshua did not completely subdue the part of the promised land strictly called Canaan — the area divided by lot among the tribes. Many of the original inhabitants remained unconquered, as the books of Joshua and Judges record. Many were left to test Israel and to be thorns in their sides and splinters in their eyes. The Jebusites remained in Jerusalem. Many Canaanites remained throughout the land. The entire nation of the Philistines remained — all dwelling within the land that had been assigned by lot, chiefly in the portions belonging to the tribes of Judah and Ephraim.

These remnants of the original inhabitants of Canaan remained unconquered until David's time — but David subdued them all. This is consistent with what Stephen observes in Acts 7:45: "which our fathers received in their turn and brought in with

Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David." The process of driving them out continued until the days of David, before they were completely subdued. But David brought them fully under control. He subdued the Jebusites and the entire nation of the Philistines and all the remaining members of the seven nations of Canaan. 1 Chronicles 18:1 says, "Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them and took Gath and its towns from the hand of the Philistines."

After this, all the remaining original inhabitants of Canaan were made servants to the Israelites. The Gibeonites had already become servants earlier — gatherers of wood and carriers of water for the house of God. But Solomon, David's son and successor, subjected all the other remaining members of the seven nations of Canaan to forced labor — or at least to a tribute of labor service, as 1 Kings 9:20-22 shows. This is why we read of "Solomon's servants" and their descendants after the return from the Babylonian captivity in Ezra 2:55 and Nehemiah 11:3 — they were the descendants of the seven nations of Canaan whom Solomon had subjected to service.

So David subdued the whole of Canaan, strictly speaking. But that was not even half, nor a quarter, of the land God had promised to their ancestors. The land God had repeatedly promised their fathers extended from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. These were the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18: "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.'" God promised the same boundaries at Mount Sinai in

Exodus 23:31: "I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you." Deuteronomy 11:24 repeats the promise: "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea." The same promise was made to Joshua in Joshua 1:3-4: "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory." But the land Joshua gave the people possession of was only a small part of this entire land. The people had never actually possessed the full extent of it until God gave it to them through David.

This larger territory included not only the Canaan divided by lot to those who came in with Joshua, but also the land of the Moabites and Ammonites, the land of the Amalekites, the rest of Edom, and the country of Zobah. David subdued all these nations and brought them under the rule of the children of Israel. He stationed garrisons in the various territories and they became David's servants, as 2 Samuel 8 describes in detail. David extended their territory to the Euphrates, as had been promised. See 2 Samuel 8:3: "David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob king of Zobah, as he went to restore his rule at the Euphrates River." Accordingly, Solomon his son is said to have ruled over all the region west of the Euphrates, as 1 Kings 4:24 says: "For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to

Gaza, over all the kings west of the River." The Persian king Artaxerxes later acknowledged this, as Ezra 4:20 records: "There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem who have ruled over all the provinces beyond the River, and toll, tribute and custom were paid to them."

So Joshua — that type of Christ — only began the work of giving Israel possession of the promised land, leaving it to be completed by that much greater type and ancestor of Christ, David, who conquered far more of the land than Joshua had. The vast extent of David's and Solomon's dominion was a picture of the great extent of Christ's kingdom. This is why the extent of Christ's kingdom is described in terms of that very dominion — stretching from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and from there to the Euphrates. Psalm 72:8 says, "May he also rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth." See also 1 Kings 8:56.

9. Through David, God perfected Israel's worship and added several new ordinances to it. The law was given by Moses, but not all the institutions of Jewish worship came through him — some were added later by divine direction. So David, the greatest of all personal types of Christ, not only completed Joshua's work by giving Israel full possession of the promised land, but also completed Moses's work by perfecting Israel's ordained worship. This shows why it took a series of typical prophets, priests, and rulers to together form one complete picture of Christ — He is the substance and fulfillment of all those types and shadows. Christ was worthy of far greater glory than Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and all the great prophets, priests, rulers, judges, and deliverers of the Old Testament combined.

David's ordinances are mentioned as having authority equal to those of Moses in 2 Chronicles 23:18: "Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the Lord, to offer the burnt offerings of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David." David perfected Israel's worship through the additions he made to the ceremonial law — described in chapters 23, 24, 25, and 26 of 1 Chronicles. These additions included dividing the Levites into several orders and assigning them different duties from those Moses had appointed. David also divided the priests, the sons of Aaron, into twenty-four courses and assigned each course its specific duties in the house of the Lord and its scheduled times of service. He also appointed certain Levites to a new office — the office of singers — organizing and regulating their duties as described in 1 Chronicles 25. He further assigned other Levites to the roles of gatekeepers, treasurers, officers, and judges. These ordinances of David were observed in the church of Israel for as long as the Jewish system continued. We find the various orders of priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and singers still functioning after the Babylonian captivity. These courses of priests appointed by David were still in place in New Testament times — Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was a priest of the division of Abijah, which corresponds to the course of Abijah that David established in 1 Chronicles 24:10.

So David, like Moses, resembled Christ the Son of David in this respect: through him God established a new structure for the church and new forms of worship. David not only added to Moses's institutions but, through those additions, abolished some of

Moses's older regulations that had been in force until that time. In particular, the Mosaic laws in Numbers 3 and 4 that assigned the Levites responsibility for carrying the various parts and furnishings of the tabernacle were now abolished by David. The Levites were no longer required to carry those things as they had done up to that point. David instead assigned them new duties, as 1 Chronicles 23:26 records: "Also to the Levites, they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof." This is clear evidence that the ceremonial law given by Moses was not permanent, as the Jewish people assumed. If David — a type of the Messiah — could abolish part of Moses's law, then the Messiah Himself could certainly abolish the whole of it.

By God's appointment, David abolished all use of the tabernacle that Moses had built according to the pattern God had given him. God now revealed to David that it was His will for a temple to be built in place of the tabernacle. This was a powerful foreshadowing of what Christ, the Son of David, would do when He came: abolish the entire Jewish religious structure — which was like a portable tabernacle — and establish the spiritual gospel-temple in its place, which would be far more glorious, far more extensive, and would last forever. David was shown the pattern of everything pertaining to the temple, just as Moses had been shown the pattern of the tabernacle. Solomon then built the temple according to the pattern he received from his father David, who had received it from God. 1 Chronicles 28:11-12 records: "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the

courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things." And verse 19: "All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."

10. The canon of Scripture appears to have been added to near or after the close of David's reign by the prophets Nathan and Gad. It is probable from Scripture that they continued the history of the two books of Samuel from where Samuel had left off and brought it to completion. These two books of Samuel appear to be what Scripture calls the book of Samuel the seer, the book of Nathan the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer — as 1 Chronicles 29:29 records: "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer."

11. The next thing to note is how God wonderfully kept the kingdom of His visible people in the line of Christ's legal ancestors for as long as Israel remained an independent kingdom. This held without any significant interruption. The kingdom of all twelve tribes was not always kept in that line — but the part of Israel where true worship of God was maintained, and which therefore represented God's visible people, was always governed by the house of David for as long as an independent king of Israel existed. This fulfilled God's promise to David. Furthermore, the throne was not only kept in the house of David generally, but always in that specific branch of David's descendants from which Christ was legally descended — so that Christ's direct legal ancestor was al-

ways on the throne, with the exception of Jehoahaz, who reigned three months, and Zedekiah — as Matthew's genealogy of Christ shows.

Christ was legally descended from the kings of Judah, though not naturally descended from them. He was both legally and naturally descended from David. He was naturally descended from Nathan the son of David — for His mother Mary was a descendant of David through Nathan, as Luke's genealogy shows. Joseph, His reputed and legal father, was naturally descended from Solomon and Solomon's successors, as Matthew's genealogy records. Although Jesus Christ was not Joseph's biological son, He was Joseph's legal heir under Jewish law, because He was the lawful son of Joseph's lawful wife, conceived while she was his legally betrothed wife. The Holy Spirit raised up offspring for him. Under the law of Moses, a person could be another man's legal son and heir without being his biological son — just as a man was sometimes required to raise up children in his brother's name. A brother was in certain cases to build up his brother's household. In the same way, the Holy Spirit built up Joseph's household.

Since Joseph stood in the direct line of the kings of Judah — the house of David — he was the legal heir to David's crown. And since Christ was legally his firstborn son, Christ was Joseph's heir. Therefore, by law, Christ was the rightful heir to the throne of David, which is why Scripture says He would sit on the throne of His father David.

The crown of God's people was wonderfully preserved in the line of Christ's legal ancestors. When David was old and no longer able to manage the affairs of the kingdom, his son Adonijah sought to make himself king and seemed to have succeeded. For a time

everything appeared to be going his way, and he thought his position was secure. But Adonijah was not the son of David who was the ancestor of Joseph, the legal father of Christ — and so Providence worked in a remarkable way. There was a sudden and dramatic reversal. All of Adonijah's power and glory collapsed almost as soon as it had begun, and Solomon — the legal ancestor of Christ — was established on the throne.

After Solomon's death, when Jeroboam conspired against the royal family and Rehoboam behaved so badly that it was remarkable any of Israel remained with him — ten tribes actually broke away and made Jeroboam their king instead — even though Rehoboam was a wicked man who deserved to be removed from power, God kept the kingdom of the two tribes, where true religion was preserved, in his possession, because he was the legal ancestor of Christ. Though Rehoboam had been wicked, and his son Abijam was likewise, God still kept the crown in that family and gave it to Abijam's son Asa, because they were legal ancestors of Christ. Many of the kings of Judah were deeply wicked and provoked God terribly — especially Jehoram, Ahaziah, Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon — yet God did not take the crown from their family. He passed it to their sons, because they were the ancestors of Christ. God's remembrance of His covenant with David is given as the reason He acted this way despite their wicked lives. Speaking of Abijam's wickedness, 1 Kings 15:4 says, "Nevertheless, for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem." And speaking of Jehoram's great wickedness, 2 Chronicles 21:7 says, "Howbeit the

Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a light unto him, and to his sons forever."

The crown of the ten northern tribes, by contrast, changed hands from one family to another constantly. Jeroboam was the first to take it, but the crown stayed in his family for only one generation after his death, passing to his son Nadab. Then Baasha, from a different family, seized it, and it lasted in his line for only one generation after his death. Then Zimri, his servant and not of his family, took it. Then Omri, from yet another family, took it without it ever descending to Zimri's descendants, and the crown continued in his family for three reigns. Then Jehu, from another family, took it, and it stayed in his line for three or four reigns. Then Shallum, from yet another family, took it, but the crown did not pass to his descendants at all. Menahem, from a different family, seized it next, and it lasted in his family for one generation. Then Pekah, from another family, took it, and after him Hoshea, from yet another family, took it. The contrast between the two kingdoms was stark — one crown remained continuously in the same family, essentially in an unbroken direct line, while the other was constantly tossed from one family to another, as if by chance. The reason was not that the kings of Judah were generally better men than the kings of Israel. The difference was that the kings of Judah had the covenant blessing in them — they were the ancestors of Christ, whose right it was to sit on the throne of Israel. The kings of Israel had no such status, and so divine Providence exercised constant care through all the changes that occurred over so many generations and such a long span of time to keep the crown of Judah in one direct line. This fulfilled the everlasting covenant

God had made with David — a covenant of sure and faithful mercies. No such covenant existed for the northern kingdom, and therefore no such providential care was given.

One more remarkable episode must not be overlooked: a powerful alliance between the kings of Syria and Israel during the reign of the wicked king Ahaz of Judah, with the goal of removing Ahaz and his family from the throne and replacing them with a man from a different family — the son of Tabeal. Isaiah 7:6 records their plan: "Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal." Their plan seemed very likely to succeed. The people were so convinced it would happen that their courage completely failed them. Scripture says, "The heart of Ahaz and his people was moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." On this occasion God sent the prophet Isaiah to encourage the people and tell them the plan would not succeed. Because the situation looked so hopeless that Ahaz and the people could hardly believe the promise, God directed Isaiah to give them a confirming sign: Christ would be born of the legal line of Ahaz. Isaiah 7:14 records: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." This was a powerful sign and a strong confirmation that the kings of Syria and Israel would never accomplish their goal of overthrowing the house of Ahaz and setting up the son of Tabeal — because Christ the Immanuel was to come from that very line.

I have discussed this particular work of Providence here because, although it continued for such a long time, it began with Solomon's succession to the throne of his father David.

12. The next thing to note is the building of the temple — a great type of three things: of Christ (especially His human nature), of the church of Christ, and of heaven. The tabernacle seemed to represent the church in its changing, temporary state in this world. But the magnificent, glorious, costly structure of the temple — which replaced the tabernacle and was a permanent rather than a movable structure — appears especially to represent the church in its glorified state in heaven. This temple was built according to the pattern the Holy Spirit revealed to David, by divine direction, on the site of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite on Mount Moriah, as 2 Chronicles 3:1 records. This is the same mountain — and almost certainly the very same spot — where Abraham offered up his son Isaac. That location is called a mountain in the land of Moriah in Genesis 22:2, and it was known as the mountain of the Lord, just as the temple mount was. Genesis 22:14 records: "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

This was the house where Christ dwelt until He came to dwell in the temple of His body — His human nature — which was the true reality that this temple foreshadowed. This is clear from John 2:19-20, where Christ, referring to the temple of Jerusalem, said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" — speaking of the temple of His body. This building, or a building on this same site, continued to be the house of God and the place of worship for His church until Christ came. Here every sacrifice was offered up until the great sacrifice came and brought sacrifice and offering to an end. The Lord Himself — the messenger of the covenant — came to this very temple. Here He often taught His heavenly doctrine and performed miracles. Here His church was

gathered through the outpouring of the Spirit after His ascension. Luke 24:53, speaking of the disciples after Christ's ascension, says, "And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Acts 2:46, speaking of the multitudes converted through the great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple." Acts 5:42, speaking of the apostles, says, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." From this place the sound of the Gospel went out and the church spread into all the world.

13. It is worth noting that at this time — during Solomon's reign, after the temple was completed — the Jewish church reached its highest point of outward glory. The Jewish church, or its ordinances and institutions, is compared to the moon in Revelation 12:1: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." In many ways the Jewish church resembled the moon, including in this: it waxed and waned like the moon. From the founding of the church in the covenant made with Abraham — when this moon was just beginning to appear — it had been gradually growing in glory up to this point. The time when the temple was completed and dedicated fell roughly midway between the calling of Abraham and the coming of Christ, and this was the full moon of the Jewish church. After this, the glory of the Jewish church gradually declined until Christ came — as I will have occasion to observe more specifically later.

At this time the church of Israel stood at its highest point of outward glory. Israel had multiplied so greatly that the people seemed to be like the sand on the seashore, as 1 Kings 4:20 de-

scribes. The kingdom of Israel was firmly established in the right family — the family from which Christ was to come. God had chosen the city where He would place His name. God had fully given His people possession of the promised land, and they now held dominion over all of it in peace and security, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. All the nations that had previously been their enemies quietly submitted to them, and none dared to rebel. The Jewish worship, with all its ordinances, was fully established. Instead of a movable tent and tabernacle, they now had a glorious temple — the most magnificent, beautiful, and costly structure that had ever existed. The people enjoyed peace and abundance; every man sat under his vine and fig tree, eating and drinking and rejoicing, as 1 Kings 4:20 records. They had reached the peak of earthly prosperity — silver was as plentiful as stones, and the land was full of gold, precious stones, and rich goods brought by Solomon's ships from Ophir and from other parts of the world. They had a king who was the wisest of men and probably the greatest earthly ruler who ever lived. Their fame spread throughout all the earth, and people came from the farthest parts of the world to witness their glory and happiness.

In this way God was pleased to give, through one of the ancestors of Christ, a remarkable picture of Christ's kingdom in its glory. David — a man of war who shed much blood and whose life was filled with trouble and conflict — more closely represented Christ in His state of humiliation, His militant state in which He struggled against His enemies. Solomon — a man of peace — represented more especially Christ exalted, triumphant, and reigning in His kingdom of peace. The glorious and happy state of the Jewish church at that time was a striking picture of two things: First, the

glorious state of the church on earth that will come in the latter ages of the world — those days of peace when nation shall not lift sword against nation, nor learn war any more. Second, the future glorified state of the church in heaven. The earthly Canaan was never a more vivid picture of the heavenly Canaan than it was at that moment, when the happy people of Israel truly enjoyed it as a land flowing with milk and honey.

14. After this, the glory of the Jewish church gradually declined, more and more, until Christ came — yet without interrupting the ongoing work of redemption. Whatever failed or declined, God still advanced this work from age to age. This building kept rising higher. Things continued to move forward, even during the decline of the Jewish church, toward a further preparation for Christ's coming — just as they had during the period of growth. The infinitely wise Governor of the world ordered all things so that whatever happened served the overarching design and became a means of advancing it. When the Jewish people flourished and prospered, God used that to further His purpose. When they were in adversity, He used that as well. While the Jewish church was in its growing phase, the work of redemption advanced through its growth. When it entered its period of decline — from Solomon's time until Christ — God carried on the work of redemption through that decline. The decline itself was one of the means God used to further prepare the way for Christ's coming.

From the time of a full moon, the moon draws ever closer to its conjunction with the sun, its light steadily diminishing until at the moment of conjunction it is completely swallowed up in the sun's light. So it was with the Jewish church from the height of its glory in Solomon's time. Near the end of Solomon's reign, things began

to darken as Solomon fell into idolatry, greatly obscuring the glory of this powerful and wise king. Troubles also began to arise in his kingdom, and after his death the kingdom divided. Ten tribes revolted, withdrawing their allegiance from the house of David and abandoning the true worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem, setting up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Shortly after this, the ten tribes suffered enormous losses in the war between Jeroboam and Abijah, in which five hundred thousand of Israel's best warriors were killed — a loss from which the northern kingdom probably never recovered.

The ten tribes finally turned away from the true God under Jeroboam. The kingdom of Judah also became deeply corrupted, and from that point forward the people were more often in a corrupt state than not. In Ahab's time, the kingdom of Israel went beyond worshiping the golden calves of Bethel and Dan and introduced the worship of Baal. The calves of Jeroboam had at least been presented as images of the true God. But Ahab introduced outright idolatry — the direct worship of false gods in place of the true God. The worship of Baal was soon introduced into the kingdom of Judah as well, during Jehoram's reign, through his marriage to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. After this God began to cut Israel back. He destroyed and sent into captivity the portion of the land east of the Jordan, as 2 Kings 10:32 and following records. Then Tiglath-Pileser conquered and deported the northern parts of the land, as 2 Kings 15:29 records. Then Shalmaneser finally subdued all the territory of the ten tribes, and they were carried into permanent captivity out of their own land. After this, the kingdom of Judah was also taken captive into Babylon, and a large portion of the nation never returned. Those who did return were a small

number compared to those who had been taken captive. For the most part after this, the Jewish people lived under foreign rule — at times subject to the kings of Persia, then to the Greek empire, and then to Rome. By the time of Christ's coming, the Jewish church had become deeply corrupt, overrun with superstition and self-righteousness. How small a flock was the church of Christ in the days of His incarnation!

Through the gradual decline of the Jewish state and church from Solomon's time onward, God prepared the way for Christ's coming in several ways.

1. The fading glory of the old covenant's outward system made room for the far more glorious dispensation of the Gospel. The glory of the old dispensation had to fade in order to make way for the Gospel — a dispensation so much more glorious that the old one had no glory by comparison. The glory of the ancient dispensation as it existed in Solomon's time — consisting so largely of outward splendor — was like a child's glory compared to the spiritual glory of the dispensation Christ brought. Under the Old Testament, the church was like a child under guardians and overseers, and God dealt with it as a child. The apostle calls those outward forms and ceremonies weak and worthless principles. It was fitting that these things should diminish as Christ drew near — just as John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, said of Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease," in John 3:30. It is fitting that faint stars should gradually fade as the sun rises. The glory of the Jewish dispensation had to be gradually reduced to prepare the way for a more joyful reception of the spiritual glory of the Gospel. If the Jewish church had still been in the same outward glory at the time of Christ's coming as it was in Solomon's reign, people

would have been so dazzled by it that they would have been unlikely to gladly exchange such great external glory for only the spiritual glory of the poor, despised Jesus.

2. The gradual decline of the Jewish state prepared the way for Christ's coming in another way: it made the power of God more visible in the great effects of Christ's redemption. The way God's people were progressively weakened and diminished step by step until Christ came was much like the reduction of Gideon's army. God told Gideon that the men with him were too many for God to deliver the Midianites into their hands, for fear that Israel would boast and say, "My own hand has saved me." So all who were afraid were told to go home, and twenty-two thousand left, leaving ten thousand. But even ten thousand were too many, so God tested them at the water and reduced the army to three hundred men. In the same way, the people in Solomon's time were too many, too mighty, and too glorious for Christ to use as they were. So God reduced them — first by the departure of the ten tribes, then by the Babylonian captivity, and then further by the widespread corruption that had set in by the time Christ came, so that Christ found very few godly people among them. And with a small handful of disciples, Christ conquered the world. High things were brought low so that Christ might be exalted.

3. This decline also prepared the way for Christ's coming by making the salvation of Jewish believers more clearly visible. Although the greater part of the Jewish nation was rejected and the Gentiles were called in their place, a great many thousands of Jews were saved through Christ after His resurrection, as Acts 21:20 records. Being lifted from such a low condition — under the

oppression of Roman rule and out of the deep superstition and wickedness into which the Jewish nation had sunk — made their redemption all the more visibly and powerfully glorious.

I have discussed this work of Providence — the gradual decline of the Jewish church — at this point in the narrative because it began during Solomon's reign.

15. The next thing to note is the additions made to the canon of Scripture during or shortly after Solomon's reign. Considerable additions were made by Solomon himself, who wrote the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, probably near the close of his reign. His writing of the Song of Songs is especially worth noting here, since it deals entirely with our subject — Christ and His redemption — representing the glorious relationship, union, and love between Christ and His redeemed church. The historical record of Scripture also appears to have been extended during Solomon's reign and some of the reigns that followed, by the prophets Nathan and Ahijah, Shemaiah and Iddo. Part of the history we have in 1 Kings was probably written by them, as suggested by 2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, and 13:22.

16. God wonderfully preserved His church and true religion throughout this entire period. This was truly remarkable, given the many serious departures into idolatry that occurred. When the ten tribes had broadly and permanently abandoned the true worship of God, God preserved true religion in the kingdom of Judah. And when the people of Judah themselves fell deeply into corruption — as they frequently did — and idolatry seemed about to swallow everything up, God kept the lamp burning. He was often pleased, when things had reached the worst point and true religion seemed

at its last breath, to bring blessed revivals through remarkable outpourings of His Spirit — particularly in the times of Hezekiah and Josiah.

17. God remarkably preserved the book of the law from being lost during long periods of general neglect and hostility toward it. The most striking example of this was the preservation of the book of the law during the great spiritual decline that characterized most of the long reign of Manasseh — which lasted fifty-five years — followed by the reign of his son Amon. During this time the book of the law was so neglected, and the temple was managed so carelessly and irreverently, that the book of the law — which had been kept beside the ark in the Most Holy Place — was lost for a long period, and no one knew where it was. Yet God preserved it from being permanently lost. In Josiah's time, when workers came to repair the temple, the book was found buried in rubble, after being missing so long that Josiah himself appears to have been largely unfamiliar with it. See 2 Kings 22:8 and following.

18. God remarkably preserved the tribe from which Christ was to come from being destroyed through the many great dangers of this period. From Solomon's reign onward, God's visible church existed mainly in the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Benjamin, which was attached to Judah, was very small, while the tribe of Judah was very large. Just as Judah took his brother Benjamin under his protection when going to Egypt to buy grain, the tribe of Benjamin seems to have remained under Judah's protection ever after. When Jeroboam set up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, the Levites from all the tribes of Israel came to Judah, as 2 Chronicles 11:13 records. But the Levites were also a small group and not counted among the tribes. Many people from the ten northern tribes also

left their inheritances at that time for the sake of worshiping God at the temple in Jerusalem, resettled in Judah, and became part of that community, as the same chapter records in verse 16. Yet the tribe of Judah was so dominant that the whole group was known simply as Judah. This is why God said to Solomon in 1 Kings 11:13, "I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen" — as verses 32 and 36 also confirm. So when the ten tribes were taken captive, Scripture says only the tribe of Judah was left, as 2 Kings 17:18 records: "Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah alone." This is why they all came to be called Jews — a word derived from Judah.

This was the tribe from which Christ was to come, and from Solomon's time onward God's visible church existed primarily within it. This was also the people over whom the kings of the house of David — the legal ancestors of Christ — ruled. This people was wonderfully preserved from destruction throughout this period, when they often appeared to be on the edge of ruin and about to be wiped out. This was the case in Rehoboam's time, when Shishak king of Egypt marched against Judah with a massive force — yet God visibly preserved them from destruction. We read of this at the beginning of 2 Chronicles 12. It happened again in Abijah's time, when Jeroboam drew up his forces against him with eight hundred thousand select warriors — a truly enormous army — as 2 Chronicles 13:3 records. God brought deliverance to Judah in that battle out of faithfulness to the covenant of grace He had made with David, as verses 4 and 5 make clear. The victory came

because the Lord was on their side, as verse 12 shows. It happened again in Asa's time, when Zerah the Ethiopian came against him with an even larger force of one million men and three hundred chariots, as 2 Chronicles 14:9 records. On that occasion Asa cried out to the Lord and trusted in Him, recognizing that it was nothing difficult for God to help those who had no power of their own. Verse 11 records his prayer: "And Asa cried to the Lord his God and said, 'Lord, it is nothing with You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power.'" God gave them a glorious victory over that mighty host.

The same pattern appeared in Jehoshaphat's time, when the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the people of Mount Seir joined forces against Judah with an army far larger than anything Jehoshaphat could assemble. Jehoshaphat and his people were terrified, but they turned to seek God and trusted in Him. God told them through one of His prophets that they had nothing to fear and would not even need to fight. They only needed to stand still and watch the Lord's deliverance. Following that instruction, they simply stood and sang praises to God, and God turned the enemy armies against one another. The people of Judah had nothing to do but collect the plunder — which was more than they could carry away. We have the full account in 2 Chronicles 20.

The same pattern appeared again in Ahaz's time, when Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel conspired against Judah and appeared certain to succeed — which we have already discussed. It appeared again in Hezekiah's time, when Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria and ruler of the most powerful empire in the world at that time, marched against all the fortified cities of Judah after conquering most of the surrounding na-

tions. He sent Rabshakeh, the commander of his army, against Jerusalem. Rabshakeh came and insulted Hezekiah and his people with great pride and contempt, treating his victory as certain. The people trembled with fear like lambs before a lion. God sent Isaiah the prophet to comfort them and assure them that the enemy would not succeed. As a confirming sign He told them that for two successive years the ground would produce food on its own from the roots of the old stalks, without plowing or sowing. In the third year they would sow and reap and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of their labor as they had before. See 2 Kings 19:29. This was given as a picture of what is promised in verses 30-31: "And the remnant that has escaped of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion those who escape. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this." The grain springing up again after being cut down — producing a new crop from roots that seemed dead, not once but twice — pictures the church reviving as if from its own ashes and flourishing like a plant that had seemingly been cut down beyond recovery. When the enemies of the church have done their worst and appear to have prevailed — when the church's very existence is barely visible, like a living root hidden underground — there is still a secret life within it that will cause it to flourish again, take root downward, and bear fruit upward. This was fulfilled at that very time. The king of Assyria had already taken the ten tribes captive. Sennacherib had also captured all the fortified cities of Judah, overrun the countryside, and left only Jerusalem. Rabshakeh had already claimed it in his own imagination — and in the terrified imagination of the people them-

selves. Yet God worked a wonderful deliverance. An angel struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the enemy camp in a single night.

19. During the reign of Uzziah and the reigns that followed, God raised up a group of outstanding prophets who would write down their prophecies and leave them for the use of His church in all ages. We have already noted how God began a continuous succession of prophets in Israel at Samuel's time, and how many of these prophets wrote under divine inspiration and added to the canon of Scripture before Uzziah's reign. But none of them are thought to have written books of prophecy until this time. Several of them did write histories of God's remarkable works toward His church. We have already noted this regarding Samuel, who is believed to have written Judges and Ruth and part of 1 Samuel — and perhaps the book of Joshua as well. Nathan and Gad appear to have written the remainder of the two books of Samuel. Nathan, together with Ahijah and Iddo, wrote the history of Solomon, which is probably what we have in 1 Kings. The history of Israel seems to have been continued further by Iddo and Shemaiah, as 2 Chronicles 12:15 indicates: "Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer, concerning genealogies?" After that the history seems to have been continued by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani, as 2 Chronicles 20:34 records: "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel" — as we find in 1 Kings 16:1, 7. Then Isaiah continued it further: 2 Chronicles 26:22 says, "Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz wrote."

He probably contributed both to 2 Kings and to his own book of prophecy. Other prophets after him continued and completed the historical record.

So from Samuel's time onward, the prophets had been continuously adding to the canon of Scripture through their historical writings. But in the days of Uzziah, God first raised up a group of major prophets who wrote not only histories but books of their own prophecies. The first of these is thought to be Hosea son of Beerī — which is why his prophecy is called the beginning of the word of the Lord, as Hosea 1:2 records: "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea." This refers to the beginning — the first installment — of the written word of that kind, namely the word committed to books of prophecy. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel. God raised up many other witnesses at about the same time to commit their prophecies to writing: Isaiah, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, and probably others. From that point forward God maintained a continuing succession of writing prophets.

This was a major work of Providence and a great advance in the work of redemption — which becomes clear when we recall that the main purpose of the prophets was to foretell Christ and His redemption. They were all forerunners of the great Prophet. The spirit of prophecy was given to them chiefly so they could bear witness to Jesus Christ, the great Redeemer who was to come. This is why the testimony of Jesus and the spirit of prophecy are spoken of as the same thing in Revelation 19:10: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, 'Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus;

worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Accordingly, the great central theme in most of the written prophecies is Christ and His redemption, and the glorious era of the Gospel that would come in the latter days — as the prophets expressed it. Other subjects appear in their writings, but these seem to serve mainly as the lead-up to their prophecy of these great things. Whatever else they speak of, their prophecies consistently arrive at this destination, as a careful reading of their writings shows.

These prophets were moved by the Spirit of Christ within them to write their prophecies chiefly to foretell and prepare the way for the coming of Christ and the glory that would follow. With what an elevated tone they all speak of these things! They speak of many other matters in ordinary human language. But when they come to this subject, the language they use takes on a joyful, heavenly grandeur. Some of them are very detailed and full in their predictions of these things — above all the prophet Isaiah, who is rightly called the evangelical prophet. He seems to teach the glorious doctrines of the Gospel almost as plainly as the apostles who preached after Christ had actually come. The apostle Paul observes that Isaiah is very bold, as Romans 10:20 notes. In New Testament usage, this means he speaks very plainly and directly. The same word is used to mean plain, clear speech in 2 Corinthians 3:12, which some translations render as "great plainness of speech."

How plainly and fully Isaiah describes the manner, circumstances, nature, and purpose of Christ's sufferings and sacrifice in chapter 53 of his prophecy! There is scarcely a chapter in the New Testament itself that is more complete on the subject. And how much, and with what glory, the same prophet speaks again and

again of the benefits Christ would bring — the unspeakable blessings that would come to His church through His redemption! Jesus Christ, the person Isaiah spoke of so extensively, once appeared to Isaiah in the form of human nature — the nature He would later take upon Himself. We have the account in Isaiah 6:1 at the beginning: "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple," and so forth. This was Christ that Isaiah saw, as the New Testament expressly tells us. See John 12:39-41.

When we consider the abundant prophecies of Isaiah and the other prophets, we see what a tremendous increase there has been in the light of the Gospel — light that had been growing since the fall of man. How much more plentiful are the revelations and prophecies of Christ now compared to what they were in the first period of the Old Testament, from Adam to Noah? Or compared to what they were in the second period, from Noah to Abraham? Or compared to what they were before Moses, or in the time of Moses, Joshua, and the judges? This period we are now discussing was a glorious advance in the work of redemption through the great additions made to the canon of Scripture. A large portion of the Old Testament was written during the time from Uzziah's reign to the Babylonian captivity. How excellent are those portions of Scripture! What a precious treasure those prophets left for the church of God — greatly confirming the Gospel of Christ, bringing comfort and blessing to God's people in every age since, and certain to continue doing so until the end of the world.

PART 6. FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY TO THE COMING OF CHRIST



I come now to the last period of the Old Testament — the period that begins with the Babylonian captivity and extends to the coming of Christ, covering nearly six hundred years. I will show how the work of redemption was carried on through this period.

Before turning to the details, I want to note three ways in which this period is distinct from all the preceding periods of the Old Testament.

1. Although Scripture does not give us a historical account of a large part of this period, the events of this period are more extensively covered in biblical prophecy than any of the preceding periods. Scripture gives us an account of how the work of redemption is carried on in two ways: through history and through prophecy. Together, these two means provide a complete account of the work of redemption from beginning to end. Although Scripture does not contain a continuous history of the whole, it does contain the en-

tire chain of great events by which God has been carrying this work forward — from just after the fall of man to its completion at the end of the world — either in history or in prophecy.

Where one of these means is lacking, the other fills in the gap. Where biblical history is silent, prophecy steps in — so the account continues unbroken all the way to the final link in the chain at the end of all things.

This is exactly what we find in the period under consideration. Although it is far less covered by biblical history than most earlier periods — with more than four hundred years for which Scripture gives us no historical record at all — the events of this period are actually more extensively covered in biblical prophecy than the events of all the preceding periods combined. Most of the remarkable prophecies in the book of Daniel refer to events that came to pass during this period. Likewise, most of the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel against Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, and many other nations were fulfilled during this period.

The reason Scripture gives us no historical account of such a large portion of this period is not that the events were less important or less significant than those of earlier times — for I will show later how great and distinctively remarkable the events of this period were. There are several other explanations. One is that God willed the spirit of prophecy to cease during this period — for reasons I may discuss later. With no prophets to write the history of these times, God ensured that the great events would not go unmentioned in His word by arranging for the scriptural prophecies to be more extensive here than in earlier periods. It is worth noting that the group of writing prophets God raised up in Israel was raised up at the end of the previous period and the beginning of

this one — likely in part because the time was approaching when the spirit of prophecy would cease and there would be no scriptural history, leaving prophecy as the only scriptural account of what was coming.

Another reason such a large portion of this period was left without a biblical historical account is that God, in His providence, ensured that reliable and detailed accounts of this period's events would be preserved in secular history. It is remarkable and worth careful attention that for the five preceding periods covered by biblical history, secular history gives us no account — or only very limited accounts. Many legendary and uncertain stories survive about earlier times, but authentic secular history is generally considered to begin only a little before Nebuchadnezzar's time, about a hundred years earlier. Scholars among the Greeks and Romans called the earlier ages the age of legend, and the time after that the historical age. From roughly that point until the coming of Christ, reliable secular history gives us clear accounts of the principal events — accounts that align remarkably well with the many biblical prophecies about those times.

This is how the great God, who orders all things, arranged it. He provided a historical account of events from the beginning of the world through all those earlier ages that secular history cannot reach, and continued it until reaching those later ages where secular history becomes reliable. Regarding those later times, He provided abundant coverage in prophecy — so that by comparing secular history with those prophecies, we could see how perfectly they agree.

2. This period, being the last period of the Old Testament and the one immediately before Christ's coming, was marked by extraordinary upheavals among the nations of the world — upheavals designed to prepare the way for the kingdom of Christ. As the time drew near when Christ, the great King and Savior of the world, was to come, the changes taking place were enormous and far-reaching. The way had been being prepared for Christ's coming since the fall of man, throughout all the previous periods. But now, as the time drew near, things were rapidly ripening for His arrival, and divine Providence was working in remarkable ways. The greatest political revolutions recorded in any history since the flood took place during this period. Nearly all of what was then known as the civilized world — all the nations surrounding the land of Canaan, both near and far, within the scope of their knowledge — were overturned again and again. Almost every land was at some point conquered, taken captive, and turned upside down — most of them repeatedly — during this period. This agrees with Isaiah 24:1: "Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and desolate, He distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants."

This overturning and upheaval began with God's visible church in their captivity to the king of Babylon. From there the cup passed to all other nations, in keeping with what God revealed to the prophet Jeremiah in 25:15-27. There the primary reference seems to be to the great upheavals that occurred during the era of the Babylonian empire. But after that there were three more general overturnings of the world before Christ came, through the succession of three great world empires that followed the Babylonian. In Scripture the king of Babylon is portrayed as an overturner of the world. But then the Babylonian empire was overthrown by Cyrus,

who established the Persian empire in its place — which was far more extensive than the Babylonian empire at its greatest. This was the second overturning of the world. Then the Persian empire was overthrown by Alexander, and the Greek empire was built on its ruins — extending even further than the Persian empire. This was the third general overturning. Then the Greek empire was overthrown by the Romans, who established the Roman empire — which vastly exceeded all previous empires in power and the extent of its rule. This was the fourth overturning of the world.

These successive empires and the great upheavals they caused are extensively described in the prophecies of Daniel. They appear in Nebuchadnezzar's statue of gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in Daniel's interpretation of it in Daniel 2. They also appear in Daniel's vision of the four beasts and the angel's interpretation in Daniel 7. The succession of the Persian and Greek empires is depicted in more specific detail in Daniel 8, through the vision of the ram and the male goat, and again in Daniel 11.

Beyond these four major overturnings, the world was in constant turmoil between them — indeed, the entire period from the Babylonian captivity to Christ was essentially one prolonged convulsion. Before this period, the world was comparatively settled. There were many great wars among the nations, but nothing like the massive, sweeping upheavals that characterized this period. Most of the nations of the world had long remained undisturbed, so to speak — never emptied from one vessel to another, as Jeremiah 48:11 says of Moab. These great overturnings happened because the time of the great Messiah was drawing near. That they were meant to prepare the way for Christ's coming is clear from Scripture, especially Ezekiel 21:27: "I will overturn, overturn, over-

turn it, and it shall be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." The prophet's threefold repetition of the word overturn refers to three distinct overturnings, just as in Revelation 8:13 the threefold repetition of the word woe indicates three distinct woes — as the following chapters confirm: Revelation 9:12 says, "One woe is past," and Revelation 11:14 says, "The second woe is past, and behold, the third woe is coming quickly."

It is important to note that the prophet Ezekiel was prophesying during the Babylonian captivity — and so after this prophecy there were still three great and general overturnings of the world to come before Christ arrived: first by the Persians, then by the Greeks, then by the Romans. After those, Christ — whose right it was to take the crown and reign — would come. Here these great overturnings are clearly spoken of as preparation for the coming and kingdom of Christ. To properly understand the passage, we must pay attention to the specific expression "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it" — that is, the crown of Israel, or the supreme earthly authority over God's visible people. God declared that this authority would be no more — meaning the crown would be removed and the diadem taken away, as stated in the preceding verse. Supreme authority over Israel would no longer remain in the royal line of David, to which it properly belonged, but would pass to others and be shifted from one power to another. First the Persians would hold it; then it would shift again, and the Greeks would hold it; then it would shift once more to the Romans. It would remain out of the Davidic line until the very person who was the Son of David — whose proper right it was — would come, and then God would give it to Him.

That these great upheavals and revolutions among the nations were all intended to prepare the way for Christ's coming and the establishment of His kingdom is further confirmed by Haggai 2:6-7: "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts." And again in verses 21-23. It is clear from this passage that the great revolutions and upheavals among the nations — by which thrones were overthrown and armies fell by each other's swords — were to prepare the way for the coming of the One who is the desire of all nations.

The great upheavals that have sometimes occurred within the visible church of Christ are compared in Revelation 12:2 to a woman in labor giving birth to Christ. In the same way, the great troubles and mighty revolutions that shook the world before Christ was born were, in a sense, the world in labor to bring forth the Son of God. The apostle Paul in Romans 8 portrays the whole creation as groaning and laboring in pain together, waiting for the freedom and revelation of the children of God. So the world, in a sense, labored in pain through continual convulsions for several hundred years to bring forth the firstborn, the only begotten Son of God. Those mighty revolutions were like the contractions of that labor. The world being kept in a state of war and bloodshed for so long a time prepared the way for the coming of the Prince of Peace — for it showed how desperately the world needed such a prince to deliver it from its miseries.

God ordained in His providence that earthly power and dominion should reach its greatest heights — appearing in its fullest glory through these four great successive empires, each greater than the one before — before He established the kingdom of His Son. This made clear how much more glorious His spiritual kingdom was than even the most magnificent earthly kingdom. The strength and glory of Satan's kingdom reached its peak in these four mighty empires — for these were heathen empires, and their strength was the strength of Satan's kingdom. God allowed Satan's kingdom to rise to such heights of power and magnificence before His Son came to overthrow it, in order to make the Son's triumph all the more glorious. Goliath had to be in full armor when the young David came against him with a sling and a stone, so that David's victory would be all the greater. God allowed one great empire to conquer another and rise even higher on its ruins, each appearing stronger than the last — with the final empire the mightiest of all — so that when Christ overthrew it, He would in a sense overthrow them all at once. This is pictured in Daniel 2, where the stone cut from the mountain without hands destroys the entire statue — the gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay — so that all of it becomes like chaff on a summer threshing floor.

These mighty empires were permitted to overthrow the world and destroy one another — yet for all their power, not one of them could sustain itself. They fell one after another and came to nothing, including the last and greatest, which had swallowed up the earth. God used them to demonstrate the instability and emptiness of all earthly power and greatness, setting off by contrast the glory of the kingdom of His Son, which will never be destroyed. Daniel 2:44 makes this clear: "In the days of those kings the God of

heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." The contrast is striking: those kingdoms vanish and pass to other peoples, but Christ's kingdom will never pass to another — it will stand forever. God allowed the devil to do his utmost — to establish his influence through the greatest, strongest, and most glorious kingdoms in the world that he could build — before the despised Jesus overthrew him and his empire. Christ came into the world to bring down every high thing in Satan's kingdom — so that God's hand would fall on everything that is proud and lofty, every high tower, and every towering mountain, as Isaiah describes in chapter 2:12 and following. Therefore these things were allowed to rise very high, so that Christ would appear all the more glorious in surpassing them.

How wonderfully did the great and wise Governor of the world prepare the way for the establishing of the glorious kingdom of His beloved Son Jesus.

3. Another remarkable feature of this last period before Christ was the wonderful preservation of the church through all these upheavals. The church's preservation during this period was in some respects more remarkable than in any period before it. It was truly extraordinary that the church — so weak and so low in status during this time, and mostly under the rule of heathen empires — should be preserved for five or six hundred years while the world was so repeatedly overturned. The earth was torn apart again and again, made desolate and empty, and its inhabitants slaughtered repeatedly by one another's swords. What made this preservation all the more remarkable was that the church was only a small band

of people, yet it survived every one of these great convulsions. This is especially striking because the land of Judea — the main place where the church lived — lay right in the middle of the conflict, directly between the contending powers. It was frequently the theater of war, repeatedly overrun and conquered, sometimes held by one people and sometimes by another. It was the object of envy and hatred from all the heathen nations around it. Time and again it was nearly destroyed — great numbers of its people were killed, the land was largely depopulated, and those who had power over the nation often intended to annihilate it completely. Yet the church endured. It was preserved through its captivity in Babylon. It was sustained through all the dangers it faced under the kings of Persia, through the even greater dangers under the Greek empire, and later when the Romans dominated the world.

The church's preservation through this period was also uniquely remarkable in that no earlier period saw the church endure persecution anywhere near the severity of what it suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes — which I will discuss in more detail later. This wonderful preservation of the church through all the world's upheavals gives vivid meaning to the opening of Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."

I have now noted several general features that distinguished this last period of Old Testament times. I turn now to consider how the work of redemption was carried on in specific detail.

1. The first event to note is the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. This was a major work of Providence — unlike anything that had come before. During the period of the judges, Israel had frequently been brought under foreign oppressors, and individual people had been taken captive at various times. But never before had there been anything like the complete destruction of the entire land — the sanctuary, the city of Jerusalem, and all the cities and villages — with the entire people carried out of their own land to a country hundreds of miles away, leaving the land of Canaan empty of God's visible people. The ark had once left the tabernacle at Shiloh and been captured by the Philistines — but never before had the sanctuary been burned, the ark completely destroyed, all the sacred vessels carried away, all regular worship brought to an end, and the land left desolate and empty for so many years. The book of Lamentations portrays all of this with vivid power.

The work of redemption was advanced by this remarkable act of Providence in the following ways.

1. It permanently cured the nation of its addiction to idolatry. Speaking of the establishment of Christ's kingdom in chapter 2:18, the prophet Isaiah identifies the abolishing of idolatry as one of the things that would accompany it: "And the idols He will completely abolish." As the time was approaching when God would abolish heathen idolatry through much of the known world — as He did through Gospel preaching after Christ came — He first pleased to remove it from among His own people. He accomplished this through the Babylonian captivity, which foreshadowed the abolishing of idolatry that God was about to bring about through Christ across so much of the heathen world.

This was the nation that had been addicted to idolatry for ages on end — a sin that nothing had been able to cure. Not all the rebukes, warnings, and punishments they had received, nor all the judgments God had brought upon them for it, had made any lasting difference. Yet now they were permanently cured. While some individuals may have fallen into this sin afterward — as happened during Antiochus's persecution — the nation as a whole never showed any appetite for it again. This was a remarkable and extraordinary change in the people, and it directly advanced the work of redemption by greatly strengthening the cause of true religion.

2. The captivity prepared the way for Christ's coming and the establishment of the glorious Gospel dispensation by removing many of the things in which the outward glory of the Jewish system had consisted. As we noted before, the outward glory of the Jewish church had to be reduced to make room for the glorious dispensation of the Gospel. The Babylonian captivity accomplished this in several ways, bringing the people very low.

First, it stripped the house of David of its royal crown — that is, of sovereign and independent self-government. The crown and authority were taken from the nation. As the time was drawing near when Christ, the great and eternal King of His church, was to reign, it was time for the typical kings to step aside. As God declared through Ezekiel in chapter 21:26, He removed the crown and diadem, so that it would be no more until He came whose right it was. From that point on the Jewish people were subject to the governing power of other nations for nearly six hundred years until Christ came — with one exception of about ninety years, during which they maintained a degree of independence through the continual wars of the Maccabees and their descendants.

The captivity also stripped away the glory and magnificence of the temple. The temple that was later rebuilt was nothing in comparison to what it had been. It was fitting that as the time drew near for the glorious fulfillment the temple had pictured to appear, the temple itself should have its glory removed.

Another thing lost in the captivity was the two stone tablets of the law — the testimony delivered to Moses, written with God's own finger. These were the tablets on which God had inscribed the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. They appear to have been preserved in the ark until the captivity. They were in the ark when Solomon placed it in the temple, as 1 Kings 8:9 records: "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb." There is no reason to think they were removed before the temple was destroyed. Jewish tradition says they were permanently lost at that time, though the same commandments were preserved in the written book of the law. These tablets were also withdrawn as their fulfillment drew near.

Another thing lost was the Urim and Thummim, which the Jews had possessed before. This is clear from Ezra 2:63: "And the governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim." There is no record that the Urim and Thummim was ever restored, and ancient Jewish writings indicate it was not. I will not attempt to explain exactly what the Urim and Thummim was, but simply note that it was something by which the high priest inquired of God and received direct answers, or through which God gave direct guidance on specific occasions. It was now withdrawn, as the time was approaching when Christ — the fulfillment of the Urim and Thummim, the great Word and Oracle of God — was to come.

Ancient Jewish writings also record that another thing absent from the second temple was the Shekinah — the cloud of glory above the mercy seat. This had been promised to be present in the tabernacle, as Leviticus 16:2 states: "For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat." Scripture records the cloud of glory descending into the tabernacle in Exodus 40:35, and similarly with respect to Solomon's temple. But there is no record of this cloud of glory being present in the second temple, and ancient Jewish tradition confirms it was not there. This was unnecessary in the second temple, because God had promised to fill that temple with glory in a different way — through the coming of Christ into it, which was later fulfilled. See Haggai 2:7: "I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts."

Ancient Jewish writings also record that the fire from heaven on the altar was withdrawn at this time. When Moses built the tabernacle and altar in the wilderness and the first sacrifices were offered, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering, as Leviticus 9:24 records. The same happened when Solomon built the temple and offered the first sacrifices, as 2 Chronicles 7:1 shows. This fire was never to go out — it was to be kept burning with the greatest care, as God commanded in Leviticus 6:13: "The fire shall be kept burning continuously on the altar; it is not to go out." There is no reason to think this fire ever went out during Solomon's time before the Babylonians destroyed the temple. But then it was extinguished and never restored. There is no record of it being given again when the second temple was built, as there had been at the building of the tabernacle and the first temple. According to ancient Jewish tradition, after the return

from captivity the people had to make do with ordinary fire instead. So the lights of the Old Testament system went out as the glorious Sun of righteousness drew near.

3. The Babylonian captivity also led to something that would later greatly advance the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the world: the scattering of the Jewish people throughout much of the known world before Christ came. The entire nation had been carried far from their own land and kept in captivity for a long time. During that time they acquired property, built homes, and settled in the land of their captivity — following the direction Jeremiah gave them in the letter he wrote to them in Jeremiah 29. When Cyrus gave them permission to return to their former homeland, many chose not to go. They were unwilling to leave their property and established lives behind and travel hundreds of miles to a desolate country that most of them had never seen. And so, as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah show, only a relatively small number returned. Many remained behind but continued to practice the same religion as those who returned, as far as was possible in a foreign land. The messengers mentioned in Zechariah 7 — Sharezer and Regemmelech — who came to inquire of the priests and prophets in Jerusalem are believed to have been sent by the Jews who had remained in Babylon.

The Jews who remained in that region were soon scattered further by the great upheavals happening throughout the world, spreading into all the surrounding countries. By the time of Esther — which was after the return from captivity — the Jews were dispersed throughout all parts of the vast Persian empire, which stretched from India to Ethiopia. Esther 3:8 records Haman's words to King Ahasuerus: "There is a certain people scattered and

dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom." They remained dispersed throughout the world until Christ came and until the apostles went out to preach the Gospel. Yet these scattered Jews held on to their religion throughout their dispersion. As I noted before, the captivity had permanently cured them of idolatry. It was also their custom for as many as possible to travel to Jerusalem for the great festivals. This is why Acts 2 records that at the feast of Pentecost there were Jews staying in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven — they had come from all the countries where they were scattered to worship at the feast. It also explains why throughout the book of Acts, wherever the apostles went to preach, they found Jews. They came to one city after another and went into the Jewish synagogue.

About two hundred years before Christ, Antiochus the Great on one occasion transplanted two thousand Jewish families from the region around Babylon into Asia Minor. Their descendants settled in Pontus, Galatia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, and Ephesus, and from there spread into Athens, Corinth, and Rome. These are the communities that gave rise to the Jewish synagogues in those cities where the apostle Paul later preached.

This worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people before Christ came prepared the way for His coming and the establishment of His kingdom in several important ways.

One way was that it created a widespread expectation of the Messiah across the world at roughly the time He actually came. The Jews carried the holy Scriptures with them wherever they were scattered, including the prophecies of the Messiah. As the nations among whom they lived became familiar with these prophecies and with the Jewish expectation of their glorious Messiah, the

birth of such a glorious person in Judea at around that time began to be the general expectation of the nations of the world. This is evident from the writings of learned heathen authors living around that time that are still available to us. In particular, Virgil — the famous Roman poet who lived just before Christ was born — wrote a poem about the expected birth of a great prince and the happy era of righteousness and peace he would bring in, using language closely resembling that of the prophet Isaiah.

Another way the dispersed state of the Jews prepared the way for Christ was by demonstrating that the Jewish dispensation had to be abolished and replaced with a new dispensation of the covenant of grace. It showed the necessity of abolishing the ceremonial law and the old Jewish system of worship. The ceremonial law was designed for a people living together in their own land — where the city God had chosen was located, where the temple stood as the only place sacrifices could be offered, where priests and Levites could legitimately serve, where people were to bring their firstfruits, and where the cities of refuge were located. But many of the scattered Jews were now living in other lands more than a thousand miles away when Christ came, making the observance of the sacrificial laws and similar requirements impossible. Though their ancestors may have been at fault for not returning to Judea when Cyrus gave permission, the situation had now become practically impossible for many of them — and this demonstrated the need for a new dispensation that would not be fitted to one particular land but would be suited to the circumstances and needs of all nations of the world.

Another way the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world prepared for the establishment of Christ's kingdom was by helping to make the facts about Jesus Christ publicly known throughout the world. As I noted before, Jews living in other countries regularly traveled to Jerusalem for their three great annual festivals. Through this, they inevitably learned about the remarkable things Christ was doing in the land. We find them present at, and deeply impressed by, the great miracle of raising Lazarus — which stirred the curiosity of foreign Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover to seek out Jesus, as John 12:19-21 shows. These men described as Greeks were foreign Jews and converts to Judaism, as is clear from their coming to worship at the Passover. Jews living abroad among Greek-speaking people and speaking their language were called Greeks or Hellenists — referred to as Grecians in Acts 6:1. The Grecians referred to here were not Gentile Christians, since this was before the calling of the Gentiles.

Through the same process, Jews who had come from other countries became acquainted with Christ's crucifixion. This is evident when the disciples on the road to Emmaus, not recognizing Christ, said to Him in Luke 24:18, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" — clearly implying that the events surrounding Jesus were so publicly known that it was remarkable to find anyone ignorant of them. They also learned of His resurrection, and when they returned to their home countries they carried the news with them, spreading these facts throughout the world just as they had previously spread the prophecies about them.

Later, those foreign Jews who had come to Jerusalem were deeply affected by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and its remarkable effects. Many of them were converted — Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome who were Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs. They returned to their home countries carrying not only the news of Christian events but Christianity itself — which contributed greatly to the spread of the faith throughout the world.

Another way the dispersion of the Jews helped establish the Gospel kingdom in the world was by opening a door for the apostles wherever they went to preach. In almost every city they entered they found Jews and Jewish synagogues where the Scriptures were regularly read and the true God worshiped — which was a great advantage to the apostles in spreading the Gospel. Their pattern was to go first into the Jewish synagogue in whatever city they entered, since the Jews were their own people, and there preach the Gospel to them. This naturally drew the attention of their Gentile neighbors, whose curiosity led them to come and hear what was being proclaimed, giving the apostles an opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles as well. This pattern is clearly seen throughout the book of Acts. Many of these Gentiles had already been prepared to some degree by their acquaintance with Jewish religion — their worship of one God, their Scriptures, and their expectation of a Messiah, all of which they had learned from their Jewish neighbors. This prior knowledge opened the door for the Gospel to reach them, and the apostles' work among them was certainly much easier than it would have

been had those people never heard of any expectation of such a person as the apostles were proclaiming, or anything about the worship of the one true God.

In all these ways, the Babylonian captivity greatly prepared the way for Christ's coming.

2. The next event to note is the addition made to the canon of Scripture during the captivity in the two remarkable portions known as the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel. Christ appeared to each of these prophets in the form of the human nature He would later take upon Himself. Ezekiel records this happening to him repeatedly. Ezekiel 1:26 says: "Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man." And again in chapter 8:1-2. Christ similarly appeared to the prophet Daniel in Daniel 8:15-16: "There stood before me one who looked like a man." "And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, 'Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.'" There are several reasons it is clear that this was Christ, which I cannot pause to detail here. Christ appeared again as a man to Daniel in chapter 10:5-6: "I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was wrapped with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude." Comparing this vision with the apostle John's vision in Revelation 1 makes it clear that this was Christ. Daniel also gives an account in the historical section of his book of a remarkable appearance of

Christ in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, recorded in chapter 3. Verse 25 describes Him as looking like the Son of God, and He clearly appeared in the form of a man: "Look! I see four men loose and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Christ did not merely appear in the form of human nature here — He appeared in a furnace, saving those who believed in Him from it. This illustrates how Christ, by entering Himself into the furnace of God's wrath, saves those who believe in Him from that furnace, so that the fire has no power over them. The wrath of God never reaches or touches them — not so much as to singe a hair of their heads.

In many respects these two prophets were more specific about the coming of Christ and His glorious Gospel kingdom than any prophet before them. Both spoke of the three great overturnings of the world that would precede His coming. Ezekiel addresses Christ's coming in detail in several places. Daniel is more specific about the timing of Christ's coming than any previous prophet — in the ninth chapter of his prophecy he foretold that it would be seventy weeks — that is, seventy weeks of years, or seventy times seven years, or four hundred and ninety years — from the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem to the Messiah's crucifixion. This reckoning begins from the commission given to Ezra by Artaxerxes, recorded in Ezra 7. In this way the specific time of Christ's crucifixion was pointed out further in advance than ever before.

Ezekiel provides a detailed mystical description of the Gospel church in his vision of the temple and city in the latter part of his prophecy. Daniel outlines the sequence of particular events that would unfold in the Christian church after Christ's coming — including the rise of Antichrist, the duration of his reign, his fall, and the glory that would follow.

The light of the Gospel keeps growing brighter the closer we come to the time of Christ's birth.

3. The next event to note is the destruction of Babylon and the overthrow of the Chaldean empire by Cyrus. The destruction of Babylon occurred on the night when King Belshazzar and the city at large were absorbed in a drunken festival held in honor of their gods — the very night Daniel was called in to read the handwriting on the wall, as Daniel 5:30 records. It came about in a way that powerfully displayed the hand of God and remarkably fulfilled His word through His prophets, which I cannot stop to trace in detail here. That great city — which had long been an enemy to God's Jerusalem — was destroyed after having stood since the first building of Babel, a period of about seventeen hundred years. If the interruption to Babel's construction at its very beginning — which prevented the city from reaching the extent and grandeur its builders intended — advanced the work of redemption, as I have already shown, then its final destruction advanced it even more.

It was a striking example of God's judgment on the enemies of His redeemed church — for God brought this destruction on Babylon because of the harm they had done to His people, as the prophets repeatedly declare. It also advanced the work of redemption by setting God's people who had been held captive free to return to their own land and rebuild Jerusalem. This is why Cyrus,

who accomplished it, is called God's shepherd in Isaiah 44 (at the end) and Isaiah 45:1. These are in addition to all the ways already noted in which the rise and fall of the four world empires advanced the work of redemption.

4. The next event to note is the return of the Jews to their own land and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. As soon as Cyrus had destroyed the Babylonian empire and erected the Persian empire on its ruins, he issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to their own land and rebuild their city and temple. This return from Babylonian captivity was, after the redemption from Egypt, the most significant of all Old Testament deliverances — and the one Scripture most insistently describes as a picture of the great redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. It was led by one of Christ's legal ancestors — Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, whose Babylonian name was Sheshbazzar. He served as governor of the Jewish people and led the first group returning from captivity. Together with Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest, he played the central role in rebuilding the temple. This deliverance came through the hands of Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest, just as the exodus from Egypt had come through the hands of Moses and Aaron.

The return from captivity was a remarkable work of Providence. It was remarkable that the heart of a heathen king like Cyrus was so inclined to support such a project — not only giving the people permission to return and rebuild the city and temple, but ordering that they be provided with silver, gold, goods, and animals, as Ezra 1:4 records. Later God wonderfully moved the heart of Darius to advance the building of the house of God at his own expense and to command the Jews' bitter enemies, the Samaritans

— who had been working to obstruct them — to assist them fully, supplying everything they needed on a daily basis. Darius made a decree that anyone who failed to comply would have timber pulled from his own house, be hanged on it, and have his house made a dunghill, as Ezra 6 records. After this, God moved the heart of Artaxerxes, another king of Persia, to promote the restoration of the Jewish state through his generous commission to Ezra, recorded in Ezra 7. He provided abundantly from his own treasury in silver and gold, offered to supply whatever more might be needed from the royal treasury, and commanded his treasurers west of the Euphrates to supply additional resources up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and unlimited salt. He also authorized the establishment of magistrates in the land and exempted the priests from taxes, tribute, and customs duties. Taken together, this decree and commission from Artaxerxes was the most complete and generous ever granted in favor of restoring Jerusalem. For this reason Daniel's prophecy refers to it as a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and from it the seventy weeks are counted.

After this, another favorable decree was granted to Nehemiah by the king of Persia, as recorded in Nehemiah 2.

It was remarkable that the hearts of heathen kings were so moved. This was the effect of His power who holds the hearts of kings in His hands and turns them wherever He wills — a striking display of His favor toward His people.

Another remarkable aspect of the restoration of the Jews to their land was that it was accomplished despite the fierce and relentless opposition of their bitter enemies, the Samaritans, who

worked persistently with every form of malice and cunning to obstruct the Jews and bring about their destruction — first through Bishlam, Mithridath, Tabeal, Rehum, and Shimshai as described in Ezra 4, then through Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates as described in chapters 5-6, and later through Sanballat and Tobiah as recorded in Nehemiah.

We have already shown how the settling of the people in the land in Joshua's time advanced the work of redemption. The same is true of this restoration. The resettlement of the Jews in Canaan was necessary to preserve the Jewish church and its institutions until Christ should come. Without this restoration of the Jewish church, temple, and worship, the people would have had no temple, no homeland, no center of worship, habitation, and gathering. The entire structure that God had done so much to establish would have been in danger of completely collapsing long before the six hundred years between the captivity and Christ had run their course. All the preparation God had been making for the coming of Christ since the time of Abraham would then have come to nothing. It was that very rebuilt temple that God would fill with glory through Christ's coming into it — as the prophets Haggai and Zechariah told the Jewish people in order to encourage them in the work of building.

5. The next event to note is the addition made to the canon of Scripture soon after the captivity by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who were sent to encourage the people in their work of rebuilding the city and temple. The main argument they used for this purpose was the approaching time of Christ's coming. Haggai foretold that Christ would be of Zerubbabel's legal line, as the last

verse of his last chapter records. This appears to be the last and most specific revelation of Christ's lineage until the angel Gabriel was sent to reveal it to His mother Mary.

6. The next event to note is the outpouring of God's Spirit that accompanied the ministry of Ezra the priest after the captivity. That such an outpouring accompanied Ezra's ministry is clear from many things recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Shortly after Ezra came up from Babylon carrying the generous commission Artaxerxes had given him — which is the starting point of Daniel's seventy weeks — he set himself to reform the sins and corruptions he found among the Jewish people. His remarkable success is recorded in Ezra 10, where we read of a widespread and profound mourning among the congregation of Israel for their sins, followed by a solemn covenant the people made with God and a thorough, general reformation. Around the same time, the people gathered together with great zeal, earnestness, and reverence to hear the word of God read by Ezra. They listened attentively as Ezra and the other priests read and explained the law, and they were deeply moved. They wept when they heard the words of the law, committed themselves to obeying it, and observed the feast of Tabernacles in a manner not seen since the days of Joshua son of Nun, as Nehemiah 8 records. After this, having separated themselves from all foreigners, they observed a solemn fast — hearing the word of God, confessing their sins, and renewing their covenant with God — and demonstrated their sincerity by actually reforming many abuses in both religion and morals, as Nehemiah 9 and the following chapters show.

It is notable that God's pattern at every significant new establishment of His visible church has been to give a notable outpouring of His Spirit. This happened at the first establishment of the Jewish church when they entered Canaan under Joshua, as we have observed. It happened again at this second settlement of the church in the same land in Ezra's time. And it happened once more at the first establishment of the Christian church after Christ's resurrection. God wisely and graciously grounded each of these new beginnings in a work of His Holy Spirit, laying a spiritual foundation for the lasting benefit of His church in each era that followed. This outpouring of God's Spirit also permanently cured the nation of the particular sin they had most recently fallen into — intermarrying with Gentiles. Whatever inclination they had felt toward it before, from that point on they showed a strong aversion to it.

7. Ezra also added to the canon of Scripture. He wrote the book of Ezra, and is generally believed to have written or at least compiled the books of Chronicles — whether or not he was the original author of all the material. That these books were written or compiled after the captivity is clear from the books themselves, since the genealogies extend beyond the captivity. For example, 1 Chronicles 3:17 and following records the descendants of Jehoiachin for several successive generations. The books also refer to the Babylonian captivity as a past event and mention things that happened after the return from captivity, as 1 Chronicles 9 shows when compared with Ezra and Nehemiah. That Ezra was the one who compiled these books is suggested by the fact that they end with words known to be Ezra's own — the last two verses are Ezra's words from the opening verses of the book of Ezra.

8. Ezra is also believed to have collected all the books then comprising the holy Scriptures and arranged them in their proper order. Ezra is consistently described as a distinguished and respected scribe of the law of God, and it is clear that the canon of Scripture during his time was under his special care. Jewish tradition, from the earliest accounts we have, has always held that the canon of Scripture — as much of it as existed at that time — was collected, properly ordered, and established by Ezra. From him they passed it down in the order he arranged it, all the way to Christ's time, when the Christian church received it from the Jewish people and has handed it down to our own day. Theologians generally accept this as established fact.

9. The work of redemption was also advanced during this period by the widespread copying of the law and the establishment of regular public readings in synagogues throughout all the cities of Israel. Before the captivity, copies of the law were very few. There was the original, kept beside the ark. Kings were required to make their own copy for personal use, and the law was to be read to the entire congregation of Israel once every seven years. There is no record of any other regular public reading of the law before the captivity. Several other indications confirm that copies of the law were extremely rare before that time. But after the captivity, regular public reading of the law was established in every synagogue throughout the land. They began with reading the law, then expanded to regular readings from the other books of the Old Testament. Passages were read from the Old Testament — both the law and the other portions of Scripture then in existence — in all the synagogues, which were established in every city and wherever Jews lived in significant numbers, functioning much as churches

do today. This was the practice in Christ's and the apostles' time, as Acts 15:21 confirms: "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Both Jews and Christians universally attribute the beginning of this custom to Ezra. There were certainly public gatherings before the Babylonian captivity — people would assemble at the temple for the great festivals, they were instructed to go to the priests when they had questions about the law, and they would go to the prophets' homes for guidance. Psalm 74:8 even mentions synagogues. But it is not thought that there were copies of the law for regular public reading and teaching throughout the land before this time the way there were afterward. This became one of the main safeguards against idolatry.

10. The next thing to note is God's remarkable preservation of the Jewish church and nation when they faced imminent destruction at the hands of Haman. The story is recorded in the book of Esther, with which you are familiar. The chain of providences that prevented this destruction was extraordinary. Esther was undoubtedly raised up for this very purpose — to be the instrument of this remarkable deliverance.

11. After this, the canon of Scripture was further enlarged by the books of Nehemiah and Esther — one written by Nehemiah himself. Whether the other was written by Nehemiah, Mordecai, or Malachi is not essential to know, as long as it was one of the books always received as part of the canon by the Jewish people, counted among the Scriptures in Christ's time, and as such approved by Him. Christ repeatedly and clearly affirmed those books that the Jewish people called the Scriptures — as could easily be demonstrated, given sufficient time.

12. After this, the Old Testament canon was completed and closed by Malachi. The way he concludes his prophecy seems to imply that the people were to expect no further prophecy and no more written revelation from God until Christ should come. In the last chapter he prophesies of Christ's coming, verses 2-3: "But for you who fear My name, the Sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing, says the Lord of hosts." Then verse 4 says, "Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel." The meaning is: hold fast to the written rule you have, expecting no more additions to it until the long night of the Old Testament is over and the Sun of righteousness at last rises.

13. Shortly after this, the spirit of prophecy ceased among that people until the time of the New Testament. So the light of the Old Testament — the stars of the long night — began to fade rapidly as the time of the Sun of righteousness drew near. We noted before how the kings of the house of David ceased before the true King and head of the church came, how the cloud of glory withdrew before Christ — the brightness of the Father's glory — appeared, and how similar things happened in several other areas. Now at last the spirit of prophecy also ceased. The time of the great Prophet of God was so close that it was time for the typical prophets to fall silent and close their mouths.

We have now worked through all the period that the Old Testament gives us a historical account of, and the last event noted by which the work of redemption was advanced was the ceasing of

the spirit of prophecy.

I now turn to show how the work of redemption was carried on through the remaining time before Christ — the period for which we no longer have the thread of biblical history to guide us as we have had until now. Instead, we have three guides: the prophecies of the Old Testament, secular historical accounts of those times, and occasional references and evidence from the New Testament about events of that period. Therefore:

14. The next event to note is the destruction of the Persian empire and the establishment of the Greek empire by Alexander. This occurred about sixty or seventy years after Malachi is believed to have prophesied, and about three hundred and thirty years before Christ. This was the third overturning of the world in this period, and it was greater and more remarkable than either of the two before it. It was especially remarkable for the speed of Alexander's conquest of the world and the enormous scale of the empire he established, which far exceeded all previous empires in its extent.

This event is discussed extensively in the prophecies of Daniel. The Greek empire is represented by the third kingdom of bronze in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. In Daniel's vision of the four beasts in chapter 7 it is represented by the third beast, which resembled a leopard with four wings on its back — picturing the speed of its conquests. It is represented in even more detail in chapter 8 by the male goat that came from the west, sweeping across the whole earth without touching the ground — portraying how swiftly Alexander overran the world. The angel himself explicitly interprets this goat as representing the

king of Greece in verse 21: "The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king" — that is, Alexander himself.

After Alexander had conquered the world, he died shortly afterward, and his empire did not pass to his descendants but was divided among four of his leading generals, as Daniel 8 goes on to describe. Daniel 11 follows the same pattern. After foretelling the Persian empire, the angel foretells of Alexander in verse 3: "And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases." Then verse 4 predicts the dividing of his kingdom among his four generals: "But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them." Two of these four generals ruled kingdoms adjacent to Judea — one controlled Egypt and the surrounding regions to the south, and the other controlled Syria and the surrounding regions to the north. These two are the kings of the north and south described throughout Daniel 11.

The establishment of the Greek empire greatly prepared the way for Christ's coming and the establishment of His kingdom in the world. Beyond the ways this upheaval shared in common with the other great overturnings already discussed, there was one distinctive contribution that particularly advanced the work of redemption: it made the Greek language the common tongue throughout much of the world. Having one widely understood language spread across most of the world was a major preparation for the establishment of Christ's kingdom. It made it vastly easier to spread the Gospel from one nation to another and ultimately to all

nations. Without a common language, the barriers would have been enormous. Although some of the first preachers of the Gospel had the gift of languages and could preach in any tongue, not all had this particular gift. Even those who did could not exercise it at will — only at special times when the Spirit of God chose to move in that way. The churches in different parts of the world — Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Corinth, and others in distant countries — could not have maintained the communication with one another recorded in the book of Acts without a common language. Before the Greek empire was established, this was the situation. But after the rise of that empire, people throughout all those regions shared a common language — Greek — which wonderfully opened the door for communication among those widely separated churches. Making Greek the common language throughout so much of the world also served the establishment of Christ's kingdom in another way: it was the language in which the New Testament was to be written. The apostles spread the Gospel through dozens of nations. If people could only access the Bible through translations into their own native languages, spreading the Gospel would have been immensely more difficult. But because Greek was already the common language everywhere, everyone could read the New Testament in the language in which the apostles and evangelists originally wrote it. The moment it was written, it was immediately accessible to the world in a language universally understood. No language was as widely understood in Christ's and the apostles' time as Greek — and the cause of that was the rise of the Greek empire.

15. The next thing to note is the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures into a language widely understood by the Gentiles. The translation I am referring to is the Greek translation commonly known as the Septuagint, or the Translation of the Seventy. This is believed to have been made about fifty or sixty years after Alexander's conquest of the world. It is the first translation of the Scriptures of which we have any reliable account. The Old Testament canon had been completed by the prophet Malachi only about a hundred and twenty years earlier in its original Hebrew language, and up to this point the Scriptures had been inaccessible to all other nations, locked away in Hebrew — a language no other people understood. Now it was translated into Greek, which, as noted above, was a language commonly understood throughout the nations of the world.

This Greek translation of the Old Testament still exists today and is widely used by scholars. Jewish tradition has many legends about how and why this translation came to be made. The truth of the matter is generally understood to be this: large numbers of Jews living outside Judea had been raised among Greek-speaking people, and Greek had become their everyday language. They could no longer read the original Hebrew. They therefore arranged for the Scriptures to be translated for their use into Greek. From that point on, Jews in all countries outside Judea used this translation in their synagogues instead of the Hebrew original.

This translation of the Scriptures into a widely understood language prepared the way for Christ's coming and the establishment of His kingdom, and afterward greatly advanced it. As the apostles went preaching throughout the world, they made extensive use of the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the prophecies concern-

ing Christ. Through this translation, and through the dispersal of the Jewish people everywhere, the apostles had the Scriptures readily available in a language the Gentiles could understand. They primarily used this translation in their preaching and writings everywhere they went — as is clear from the fact that in the countless quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament writings, they almost universally follow the exact wording of the Septuagint. The meaning is the same as in the original Hebrew, but the words are often different — as anyone familiar with their Bible will recognize. When the apostles in their letters and the evangelists in their histories quote from the Old Testament, the wording often differs from what we have in the Old Testament. But in nearly every case these quotations match the exact words of the Septuagint, which is easily confirmed by comparing them directly since both are in Greek. This makes it clear that the apostles commonly used this translation in their preaching and writing. And this same translation was the one primarily used in Christian churches throughout most parts of the world for several hundred years after Christ.

16. The next thing to note is the wonderful preservation of the church when it was under imminent threat and persecution during the Greek empire.

The first threat came from Alexander himself. While besieging the city of Tyre, he sent to the Jews for assistance and supplies for his army. When they refused out of faithfulness to their oath to the king of Persia, Alexander — a man of fierce and violent spirit, in keeping with Scripture's depiction of him as the rough male goat — marched against them with the intention of destroying them. But when the priests went out to meet him in their priestly garments,

God wonderfully turned Alexander's heart to spare them and show them favor — much as He had turned Esau's heart when he met Jacob.

After this, one of the kings of Egypt — a successor of one of Alexander's four generals — formed a plan to destroy the Jewish nation. He was remarkably and wonderfully prevented by a direct intervention of heaven on their behalf.

But the most remarkable preservation of all during this period was under the brutal persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria and successor of another of Alexander's four generals. The Jews at that time were under Antiochus's power. Filled with rage against them, he worked relentlessly to destroy them entirely — or at least to eliminate all who refused to abandon their religion and worship his idols. He did in fact largely devastate the country, depopulate the city of Jerusalem, and desecrate the temple by setting up his idols in parts of it. He persecuted the people with unrelenting cruelty, surpassing any previous persecution on record. Many of the specific details of this persecution would be deeply moving, if time permitted me to describe them. This brutal persecution began about a hundred and seventy years before Christ. It is described extensively in Daniel's prophecy — see Daniel 8:9-25 and 11:31-38. These persecutions are also referred to in the New Testament in Hebrews 11:36-38.

Antiochus intended not only to destroy the Jewish religion but, as far as he could, the Jewish nation itself. He also worked tirelessly to destroy every copy of the law. Given how weak the Jewish people were compared to a king of such enormous power, God's providence in defeating his plan was truly remarkable. Many times the Jews appeared to be on the very edge of destruction, about to

be completely overwhelmed. Their enemies often felt certain of victory. On one occasion an enemy army came against the Jewish people with the specific plan of killing all the men and selling the women and children as slaves. Their confidence was so great, and the demand for slaves so anticipated, that over a thousand merchants accompanied the army with money in hand, ready to buy the captives. But God remarkably raised up and strengthened a man named Judas and his successors, known as the Maccabees, who with a small force by comparison defeated their enemies again and again and delivered their people — just as Daniel 11:32 had foretold. Speaking of Antiochus's persecution, it says, "By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action."

God afterward brought Antiochus to a terrible and miserable end through a loathsome disease, with dreadful physical agony and mental torment — as Daniel 11:45 had foretold: "Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him."

After his death, further attempts were made to destroy the church of God, but God defeated them all.

17. The next event to note is the fall of the Greek empire and the rise of the Roman empire. This was the fourth great overturning of the world during this period. Though it came about more gradually than the rise of the Greek empire, it far surpassed it — the Roman empire was by far the largest and most powerful earthly empire ever. It was so dominant that it was commonly called "all the world," as in Luke 2:1: "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth" — meaning the entire Roman empire.

This empire is described as by far the strongest and greatest of the four in Daniel 2:40: "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces." See also Daniel 7:7, 19, and 23.

The Romans first conquered and subjugated the land of Judea between sixty and seventy years before Christ was born. Shortly after that the Roman empire reached its greatest extent, and the world remained under its rule from that point until Christ came and for many hundreds of years afterward.

The fact that the nations of the world were united under one empire when Christ came and when the apostles went out to preach greatly prepared the way for the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of Christ's kingdom. With the world under a single government, communication between nations was open and travel was far easier — giving the Gospel a much faster path through the world. This is similar to how things work today: when something spreads within England, it moves quickly from one part of the country to another throughout all the regions under the English government — far more easily than it spreads to other nations with separate governments and little connection to England. Traveling between countries under different independent governments involves countless obstacles that simply do not exist when traveling between different parts of the same kingdom under the same ruler. So the fact that the world was under one government — Roman rule — in Christ's and the apostles' time made travel easier for the apostles and greatly facilitated the spread of the Gospel.

18. Around this same time, learning and philosophy had reached their peak in the heathen world. The great flowering of learning in the heathen world occurred primarily during this period. Nearly all the famous philosophers of antiquity lived after the Babylonian captivity. Almost all the great thinkers of Greece and Rome flourished during this time. Many of these philosophers were men of considerable worldly wisdom, and their main professed pursuit was to discover where human happiness truly lay and how people could obtain it. They threw themselves into this inquiry with apparent earnestness and produced vast numbers of books on the subject, many of which still survive. Yet they were sharply and endlessly divided in their conclusions — scholars have counted several hundred different opinions among them on this single question. They exhausted themselves in vain, wandering in the dark, without the glorious Gospel to guide them. God was pleased to allow men to do the utmost that human wisdom could accomplish and to test the limits of human understanding in seeking the way to happiness — before the true light came to enlighten the world, before He sent the great Prophet to lead humanity in the right way. God allowed these great philosophers to make the attempt for six hundred years, and the result of all that time showed that everything they could do was useless. The world did not become wiser, better, or happier under their instruction — it became more foolish, more wicked, and more miserable. God allowed human wisdom and philosophy to reach their highest point before Christ came, so that it might be clearly seen how far human reason could go even at its best — and so that the necessity of a divine teacher would be evident before Christ arrived. God then made the wisdom of this world look foolish, exposing the futility of

humanity's best efforts, through the doctrines of His glorious Gospel, which were completely beyond the reach of all their philosophy. See 1 Corinthians 1:19-21.

After God had demonstrated the emptiness of human learning when set up in the place of the Gospel, He was pleased to make it a servant to the purposes of Christ's kingdom — a tool in the hand of divine revelation. In this way, the flourishing of learning in the world before Christ came prepared for His arrival in two ways: it revealed the emptiness of human wisdom and showed the necessity of the Gospel, and it also prepared a tool that could serve the Gospel. This is exactly how it was used in the apostle Paul, who was noted for his extensive learning, as Acts 26:24 shows. He was skilled not only in Jewish learning but also in philosophy, and he put that knowledge to work in service of the Gospel — as seen in his engagement with the philosophers in Athens in Acts 17:22 and following. Through his learning he knew how to speak effectively to educated audiences, as his speech there shows. He knew how to draw on what he had read in their own writings, and he quotes their own poets. Dionysius, who was a philosopher, was converted through Paul's preaching and, according to church history, became a significant instrument in advancing the Gospel. Many others in that and following generations were of great service to Christ's kingdom through their classical learning.

19. Just before Christ was born, the Roman empire was at its greatest height and had been settled in peace. About twenty-four years before Christ was born, Augustus Caesar — the first Roman emperor — began to rule as emperor of the world. Until that time the Roman state had long been a republic governed by the senate. Now it became an absolute monarchy. Augustus Caesar was not

only the first Roman emperor but the greatest — he reigned in supreme glory. So the power of the heathen world — which was Satan's visible kingdom — had now reached its highest point, having been rising and growing stronger from the days of Solomon to this time, a period of about a thousand years. It had now reached a height greater than at any time since the beginning of Satan's heathen kingdom, which had its probable origin around the time of the building of Babel. The heathen world now stood at its peak of power, wealth, and learning.

In preparing the way for Christ's coming, God took an approach completely opposite to what human wisdom would have chosen. He brought His own visible people very low and made them weak — while the heathen, who were His enemies, He raised to their greatest height — so that the triumph of Christ's cross would be all the more glorious. With a small, weakened people, He conquered His enemies at their most powerful. In this way Christ triumphed over principalities and powers through His cross.

For many years Augustus Caesar had been consolidating the Roman empire — subduing enemies in one region after another — until the very year Christ was born, when all opposition had been overcome and his dominion over the world stood at its greatest glory. Everything had settled into peace. In recognition of this, the Romans closed the temple of Janus — their established symbol of universal peace throughout the empire. This universal peace, which began in the year of Christ's birth, lasted twelve years, until the year when Christ debated with the teachers in the temple.

So after centuries of turmoil — like four winds driving together on a stormy sea, out of which the four great empires had arisen — the world had now reached the peak of the fourth and last empire

and settled into calm. Everything was now ready for the birth of Christ. This remarkable universal peace, following so many ages of upheaval and war, was a fitting introduction to usher the glorious Prince of Peace into the world.

I have now completed the first great period of the entire span from the fall of man to the end of the world — the period from the fall to the incarnation of Christ. I have demonstrated the first proposition: that from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ, God was doing all the things that were preparatory to Christ's coming and forerunners of it.

IMPROVEMENT



Before moving on to the next proposition, I want to offer a few reflections on what has been presented here.

1. What we have seen gives strong grounds for concluding that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God and the Savior of the world — and therefore that the Christian faith is the true religion. Christ is the very person so plainly pointed to in all the great works of divine Providence from the fall of man onward, and He was undoubtedly foretold age after age in countless ways and foreshadowed in a vast variety of types and pictures. If we thoughtfully consider the course of history from the beginning and trace the movements of all the great wheels of Providence from one age to the next, we will see that they all converge here. They are like countless lines that, when followed carefully, are all found to meet at the same point. It is so plain in many cases that denying it would reflect a failure to think clearly. This is therefore undeniable: that this person is a divine person sent from God, who came into the world with God's commission and authority to do His work and declare His mind. The great Governor of the world declared it through all His great works before and after the flood — to Jews and Gentiles — down to the very birth of Christ. It cannot be mere imagination; it is a clear and evident truth that the person

born in Bethlehem, who lived in Nazareth and Capernaum, and was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, must be the great Messiah, the Anointed of God. Blessed are all who believe in and confess Him; miserable are all who deny Him. This exposes the unreasonableness both of the Deists, who reject revealed religion, and of the Jewish people, who deny that this Jesus is the Messiah promised to their fathers.

Someone might object here that perhaps clever men contrived this history and these prophecies to all point to Jesus Christ, in order to confirm that He is the Messiah. To that objection one may reply: how could clever men have arranged things to point to Jesus Christ long before He was ever born? How could they have known that any such person would ever appear? How could their cleverness help them foresee and predict an event many ages in the future? The fact that the Jewish people possessed these writings long before Christ was born is beyond question — they still hold them in high esteem today, wherever they are scattered throughout the world. They would never have accepted a fabrication invented by Christians to point to and confirm Jesus as the Messiah, whom they have always denied. Still less would they have been persuaded that they had always possessed books that were actually recently fabricated and handed to them.

2. What we have seen also provides a strong argument for the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, based on the remarkable harmony that runs through them — how they all point to the same thing. As we have seen, all the parts of the Old Testament, though written by many different authors in widely separated eras, are in perfect harmony with one another. They all agree, all pointing to the same thing — a future event, something

that none of them could have known except by divine revelation: the future coming of Christ. This is plainly evident from everything we have examined.

If the Old Testament was not divinely inspired, how can this agreement be explained? If these were merely human writings, composed without any divine guidance, then none of these authors knew that someone like Jesus Christ would come into the world. His coming would have been nothing but a product of their imagination. If so, how did something they imagined actually come to pass? How did a prediction they made without any basis for making it turn out to be exactly fulfilled? And how did they all agree on it — all pointing to the exact same event — even though many of them lived hundreds of years apart?

This remarkable agreement, pointing to a single future event across all these writings, is therefore clear and certain evidence of the divine authority of the Old Testament.

3. This also shows how weak an objection it is when some people argue that parts of the Old Testament cannot be the word of God because they consist so largely of historical accounts of the wars and public affairs of the Jewish nation. Some say: we find among the books of a particular nation their chronicles of national affairs from one age to the next — records of their kings, their wars with neighboring peoples, and the changes in their government over time. Other nations also kept such records. Why, then, should we regard the Jewish records as the word of God any more than those of other peoples? But what we have seen shows the emptiness of that objection. The case of these histories is entirely different from all other histories. This history alone gives us an account of the original of all things, and it alone traces things in a remark-

able chain from that origin, giving us a view of the grand scheme of divine Providence moving toward its ultimate end. Together with the doctrines and prophecies contained in it, this same book gives us a view of the entire series of great events in divine Providence — from the very beginning to the final consummation of all things — and provides an excellent and glorious account of the wise and holy purposes of the Governor of the world in all of them.

No ordinary history was written by authors like those of this history — men who came with clear signs and evidence that they were prophets of the Most High God, directly inspired by Him.

The historical books of the Old Testament, as we have seen from our study of this proposition, all record those great events of Providence through which God has been advancing the glorious work of redemption from age to age. Though they are historical in form, they are no less filled with divine instruction — no less full of what reveals Christ and His glorious Gospel — than the non-historical portions of Holy Scripture.

To object that a book cannot be divine simply because it is historical is a weak argument — as if something could not be the word of God because it tells us what has happened, or as if it would be unreasonable for God, in giving mankind a revelation, to include an account of His own providential works. If that objection holds, it must be because His works are not worth recording. It must be because the design of His government — the entire series of His dealings with His church and with the world He made, by which He has ordered all things from age to age — is not worthy of any record.

The very fact that all civilized nations have kept records of their wars and the changes in their territories, far from being an argument against Scripture's historical portions being the word of God, is actually a strong argument in favor of it. If reason and the light of nature lead all civilized peoples to preserve records of the events of their human governments and publish histories for others to learn from — how much more should we expect God to give the world a record of His divine government, which is surely infinitely more worthy of being set down for our instruction? If wise kings have taken care to ensure good histories were written of the nations they ruled, should it seem incredible that Jesus Christ would take care that His church — His nation, His own people — would have in their hands a reliable and certain history of their community and of His governance of them?

Without the history of the Old Testament, how completely in the dark we would be about so many things the church of God needs to know! We would know nothing of God's dealings with humanity and with His church from the beginning. We would be entirely in the dark about the creation of the world, the fall of man, the first rise and ongoing development of God's gracious dealings with fallen humanity. We would know nothing of how God first established a church in the world, how it was preserved, how He governed it from the beginning, how the light of the Gospel first began to dawn in the world, how it grew, and how everything was being prepared for the coming of Christ.

If we are Christians, we belong to that building of God which has been the subject of our discussion throughout this text. But without the history of the Old Testament, we would never have known what first prompted God to begin this building, how its

foundation was laid, or how the work proceeded from the start. The period covered by the history of the Old Testament is mostly a time that no other historical record reaches. If God had not taken care to provide and preserve an account of these things for us, we would have had none at all.

Those who object to the authority of the Old Testament's history of the Jewish nation might just as well object to Moses's account of creation on the grounds that it too is historical. For in the rest of the Old Testament history we have an account of a work no less important — the work of redemption. In fact it is a far greater and more glorious work, as we noted earlier. If we ask which is the greater work — creation or Providence — the answer must be: Providence. And the work of redemption is the greatest of all the works of Providence.

Let those who raise this objection consider: which part of the Old Testament history could be removed without creating a serious gap in the chain of events through which this glorious work has been advanced? This leads me to a further observation.

4. From what has been said, we can see much of God's wisdom in the composition of the Old Testament Scriptures — in the specific parts of which it is made up. We can see that God has wisely given us in the Old Testament exactly the revelations we needed. Let us briefly survey the various parts of it and consider why each was necessary.

First, it was necessary that we have some account of the creation of the world, of the fall into sin, of the universal flood, and of the origin of the nations that descended from those who survived it.

It was also necessary to have some account of the succession of God's church from the beginning. God allowed all the world to fall away and chose only one nation to preserve true worship and religion until the Savior of the world should come. Through that nation the world was to be gradually prepared for the great light and wonderful events that would follow, and that nation was to be a typical people in whom God would foreshadow and teach all future glories of the Gospel as under a veil. It was therefore necessary to have an account of how this was accomplished — through the calling of Abraham, through Israel's bondage in Egypt, and through their being brought into Canaan. It was also necessary to have an account of the revelation God gave to that people in the giving of the law, in the appointment of their symbolic worship, and in all the things through which the Gospel was veiled — and of the shaping of that people in both their civil and religious life.

It was clearly necessary to have some account of Israel's actual arrival in Canaan, the promised land where they would make their home. It was very necessary to have a history of the succession of the church of Israel and of the providences of God toward them that were most significant and most rich in Gospel meaning. It was necessary to have some account of the highest outward glory that nation reached under David and Solomon, with particular detail about David — whose story is so full of Gospel content and so important for understanding how the Gospel would enter the world, and in whom the royal line began. It was also necessary to have an account of the building of the temple, which was likewise so filled with Gospel significance.

It was important to have an account of the division of Israel and Judah, of the ten tribes' captivity and final rejection, and a brief account of why this happened — and therefore a brief history of them leading up to that point. It was necessary to have an account of the succession of the kings of Judah and of the church until the Babylonian captivity, and an account of the return from captivity, the resettlement in the land, and the origin of the state the church was in during its final period before Christ came.

A little reflection will convince anyone that all of these elements were necessary and that none of them could be removed. In general, it was essential to have a history of God's church during those times that fall within the range of human historical memory. And it was of great importance to have an inspired history of those periods of the Jewish church when God kept up an especially close and direct communication with His people — when He dwelt among them visibly, as it were, revealing Himself through the Shekinah, through Urim and Thummim, and through prophecy, directing their affairs more immediately. It was also necessary to have some account of the great works of God in prophecy that would follow after the era of inspired history ended. It was therefore entirely fitting and necessary that a number of prophets be raised up to foretell the coming of the Son of God and the nature and glory of His kingdom — so many heralds preparing the way before Him — and that their prophecies would be preserved in the church.

It was also of great importance that the church receive a book of divinely inspired songs, in which the true spirit of devotion would be vividly portrayed — faith, hope, love, joy, surrender, humility, obedience, repentance, and all the rest. It was important to

have books of moral instruction like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, dealing with human affairs and the practical concerns of life, providing rules of genuine wisdom and sound judgment for every circumstance. It was also fitting to have a song representing the great love between Christ and His bride the church, particularly suited to expressing a true Christian soul's holy affections toward Christ and representing His grace and extraordinary love for and delight in His people — which is what we have in the Song of Solomon. Above all it was important to have a book that would teach us how to conduct ourselves under suffering — since the church of God is in a state of struggle here, and God's people enter the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation. The church endures hardship for so long and faces such intense trials and extreme suffering before her final age of peace and rest arrives. God has therefore given us a book perfectly suited to these circumstances: the book of Job, written on the occasion of a particular believer's sufferings, and probably given first to the church during its affliction in Egypt. The apostle James uses it to comfort Christians under persecution in James 5:11: "You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." God also chose, in the book of Job, to give some picture of ancient theology from before the giving of the law.

From this brief survey, I think it is clear that every part of the Old Testament Scriptures is genuinely useful and necessary, and that no part of it could be removed without loss to the church. And so, as I said, God's wisdom is clearly visible in arranging for the Old Testament Scriptures to consist of exactly the books they do.

Before leaving this point, I want to note that the Old Testament history is detailed and extensive precisely where the work of redemption called for it — where the most was being done to advance that work, to picture Christ, and to prepare the way for Him. It is extensive and detailed in the history of Abraham and the other patriarchs, but brief in covering the time Israel spent in Egypt. It is again extensive in the account of the redemption from Egypt and the establishing of the Jewish church and nation under Moses and Joshua, but much briefer in the period of the judges. It is again extensive and detailed in the accounts of David's and Solomon's reigns, and then much shorter in the history of the following reigns. In this way the length of the accounts expands or contracts in direct proportion to how much of the work of redemption is visible in them.

5. From what has been said, we can see that Christ and His redemption are the great subject of the entire Bible. This is obvious with respect to the New Testament. But as we have seen throughout our study, it is equally true of the Old Testament. Christ and His redemption are the great theme of the Old Testament prophecies, as we have shown. He is also the great theme of the Old Testament songs, and all the moral rules and instructions given there are subordinated to Him. Christ and His redemption are likewise the great theme of Old Testament history from the very beginning — and even the account of creation functions as an introduction to the history of redemption that immediately follows it. The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is filled with the Gospel. The difference is only this: the Old Testament contains the Gospel under a veil, while the New Testament unveils it, so that we may behold the glory of the Lord with open face.

6. From what has been said, we can see the value and excellence of the Old Testament. Some are inclined to regard the Old Testament as out of date — as if those of us living in the era of the Gospel have little use for it. This is a serious mistake, arising from failure to understand the nature and purpose of the Old Testament. If people understood it, they would find it full of the Gospel of Christ and would see how beautifully it illuminates and confirms the glorious teachings and promises of the New Testament. Even those parts of the Old Testament most commonly thought to contain the least divine instruction are like mines filled with Gospel treasure. The reason people think they contain so little is simply that they read them too hastily and superficially. The treasure buried underneath goes unnoticed. They only look at the surface and quickly conclude there is nothing there. But they have never dug into the mine. If they had, they would find it richly stored with treasure and would be richly rewarded for the effort.

What has been said should help us see what a precious treasure God has placed in our hands by giving us the Bible. How little do most people appreciate what they have in possessing the Bible — a book they hold in their hands and can read whenever they please. What an extraordinary book it is, surpassing all human writings — revealing God to us, showing us the grand design and glorious plan of Providence from the beginning of the world in history and prophecy, revealing the great Redeemer and His glorious redemption, and tracing all the steps by which God brings it to completion from the laying of the foundation to the placing of the capstone! Do we value a history that gives us a clear account of some great earthly ruler or military commander — of Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or the Duke of Marlborough? Then shall we not

value the history God has given us of the glorious kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ, the Prince and Savior — the account of the wars and great deeds of that King of kings and Lord of armies, the Lord mighty in battle? The history of what He has accomplished for the redemption of His chosen people?

7. What has been said should also make us aware of how much most people are at fault for reading the Scriptures inattentively and without observing what is actually there. How much is contained in the Scriptures, for those who will look for it! The Bible is the most comprehensive book in the world. But what good will all that do us if we read it without noticing the purpose of the Holy Spirit in it? The psalmist in Psalm 119:18 prays, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." The Scriptures are full of wonders. Those accounts so often read as if they were simply personal histories of individuals — the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the story of Ruth, the histories of leaders and rulers like Joshua, the judges, David, and the kings of Israel — are accounts of vastly greater things, of far more importance and wider significance than most readers ever realize.

Scripture histories are commonly read as if they were stories written simply to entertain, to pass the time — while the infinitely important things contained or pointed to in them are passed over and never noticed. Whatever treasures the Scriptures contain, we will be no better for them if we do not attend to them. A person who has a Bible and does not observe what is in it is like someone who has a box full of silver and gold but does not realize it — who treats it as nothing more than a container of ordinary stones. As long as that is the case, the treasure does him no good. The person who does not know he has treasure will never use it, and might as

well have nothing. A person who has a plentiful supply of the finest food stored in his house but does not know it will never taste any of it — and is just as likely to starve as if the house were empty.

8. What has been said shows us how great a person Jesus Christ is, and how momentous the mission He came into the world to accomplish — given how much was done to prepare for His coming. From the very beginning of the world, God had been doing nothing other than preparing the way for His coming and advancing the work He was to do in the world, through all the ages of history. If we heard that a certain person was about to arrive in a country, and we observed that enormous preparations were being made — months of effort, great changes to the state of the entire country, many people of great importance engaged in the preparations, the whole land reshaped with all its affairs arranged to serve the welcome of this one person — we would naturally conclude: this must be a truly extraordinary person, and his business here must be of the greatest importance.

How great, then, must He be for whose coming into the world the great God of heaven and earth — the Governor of all things — spent four thousand years in preparation? He began working toward it soon after the world was created and from age to age accomplished great things: bringing about mighty events, performing wonders without number, repeatedly overturning the world to make way for it, causing every circumstance of human history and every revolution and change in the world from generation to generation to serve this one great design. Surely this must be an utterly extraordinary person, and the work He was coming to accomplish must be a work of the greatest imaginable importance.

Matthew 21:8-10 tells us that when Christ entered Jerusalem and the crowds ran ahead of Him, cutting down palm branches and spreading them on the road, laying their garments down before Him and crying "Hosanna to the Son of David," the whole city was stirred and asked: Who is this? They were amazed that such an extraordinary person was being welcomed with such fanfare. But if we consider what we have seen — the great things done in every age to prepare the way for Christ's coming into the world, and how the world was repeatedly overturned to make room for it — we have still greater reason to ask, Who is this? What great person is this? And to say, as in Psalm 24:8 and 10, "Who is this King of glory" — that God should show such regard and bestow such incomprehensible honor upon Him? Surely this person is incomparably honored in God's sight and deeply beloved by Him, and surely the mission on which He has been sent into the world is of the highest possible importance.

PERIOD 2



Having shown how the work of redemption was carried on through the first period — from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ — I turn now to the second period: the time of Christ's humiliation, covering the span from His incarnation to His resurrection. This is the most remarkable stretch of time that ever was or ever will be. Though it lasted only between thirty and forty years, more was accomplished in it than had been done from the beginning of the world to that point. We have observed that everything done from the fall to the incarnation of Christ was only preparatory for what was now to be done. It may also be noted that all that took place before the beginning of time — in the eternal counsels of God and the eternal transaction among the persons of the Trinity — looked forward primarily to this period. We therefore proceed to consider the second proposition:

During the time of Christ's humiliation — from His incarnation to His resurrection — the purchase of redemption was made.

Although many things had been done in connection with redemption from the fall of man up to this time, and although millions of sacrifices had been offered, nothing had yet been done to

purchase redemption before Christ's incarnation. Not one part of the price had been paid, not one part of the purchase made, until now. But as soon as Christ was incarnate, the purchase began immediately, without delay. The entire time of Christ's humiliation — from the moment He was incarnate until the morning of His resurrection — was spent in this purchase. And then the purchase was entirely and completely finished. Nothing was done before Christ's incarnation to purchase redemption, and nothing was done after His resurrection to purchase it either. Nor will anything more ever be done to all eternity. At the very moment Christ's human nature was no longer held under the power of death, the last penny of the price of salvation for every one of the elect had been paid in full.

To consider in an orderly way the great things our Redeemer did to purchase redemption for us:

1. I will speak of Christ's becoming incarnate in order to qualify Himself for this purchase; and
2. I will speak of the purchase itself.

PART 1



First, I want to consider Christ's coming into the world — His taking on our nature in order to put Himself in a position to purchase redemption for us. Christ became incarnate — or, what is the same thing, became a man — in order to be capable of working out our redemption. Although Christ as God was infinitely sufficient for the work, being capable of performing it directly required that He be not only God but also man. If Christ had remained only in the divine nature, He would not have had the capacity to purchase our salvation — not due to any imperfection in the divine nature, but precisely because of its absolute and infinite perfection. As God alone, Christ was not capable of the obedience or suffering that was required. The divine nature cannot suffer, for it is infinitely above all suffering. Neither can it render obedience to the law that was given to humanity. It is just as impossible for one who is only God to obey the law given to man as it is for Him to bear man's punishment.

It was not enough for Christ to take on some created nature — He had to take on our nature specifically. It would not have been sufficient for us for Christ to have become an angel and to have obeyed and suffered in an angelic nature. He had to become a man, and that for three reasons.

1. It was necessary to satisfy the law that the nature to which the law was given should obey it. Man's law could not be answered except by being obeyed by man. God required that the law He had given to humanity be honored, accepted, and fulfilled by the human nature — otherwise it could not be answered on behalf of men. The commands spoken — "You shall not eat of it," and "You shall" or "You shall not do this or that" — were addressed to the human race, to human nature. Therefore human nature must fulfill them.

2. It was necessary to satisfy the law that the nature that sinned should die. The words "You shall surely die" were addressed to human nature — the same nature to which the command was given was the nature to which the penalty was directed.

3. God determined that the same world that was the scene of man's fall and ruin should also be the scene of his redemption. Scripture frequently speaks of Christ coming into the world to save sinners, and of God sending Him into the world for this purpose. It was necessary that He come into this sinful, broken, lost world to restore and save it. For man's recovery, He had to come down to man — to the world that is man's proper home — and take up residence with us. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Concerning the incarnation of Christ, I want to note the following things.

I. The incarnation itself — in which two things especially are to be considered:

1. His conception, which took place in the womb of a member of the human race, making Him truly the Son of Man — a title He was often given. He was a descendant of Adam, a son of Abraham, and a son of David in fulfillment of God's promise. But His conception was not through ordinary human generation; it was by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ was formed in the womb of the Virgin from her own bodily substance, by the power of the Spirit of God. He was directly the son of the woman, but not directly the son of any man — and so He was the seed of the woman and the son of a virgin, one who had never known a man.

2. His birth — Although Christ's conception was supernatural, after He was conceived and the incarnation had begun, His human nature developed gradually in the womb of the virgin through a natural process. His birth was therefore natural in its manner. But because His conception was supernatural — by the power of the Holy Spirit — He was both conceived and born without sin.

II. The second thing to note about the incarnation of Christ is the fullness of the time in which it occurred. It came after everything had been prepared for it from the very fall of mankind, when all things were ready. It happened at the time which infinite wisdom determined to be the most fitting: Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

This was the most fitting time in every respect. Any time before the flood would not have been appropriate. The ruin that the fall had brought on humanity had not yet been fully displayed. The curse had not fully fallen on the earth before the flood — though the ground had been cursed to a significant degree, God determined that before Christ's restoration, the curse should once be

executed in a universal destruction of the very form of the earth, so that the terrible effects of the fall could be seen plainly before the recovery. Though people were mortal before the flood, their lives lasted for most of a thousand years — almost a kind of immortality compared to the length of human life today. God determined that the curse — "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" — should be fully executed and seen in its greatest severity before the Redeemer came to purchase never-ending life for humanity.

It would also not have been the right time for Christ to come after the flood but before Moses's time. Until then, humanity had not yet fallen universally away from the true God into heathen darkness, and so the need for Christ as the light of the world was not yet fully evident. The terrible consequences of the fall with respect to human mortality were also not fully clear until then — human lifespan had not yet been reduced to its present length until roughly the time of Moses.

It was most fitting that the Messiah should not come until many ages after Moses's time — until all nations outside of Israel had long been living in heathen darkness — so that the hopelessness of their condition could be established by long experience, and the absolute necessity of the heavenly Physician made undeniable before He arrived.

Another reason Christ did not come soon after the flood was probably that the earth needed to be filled with people — so that Christ might have a more extensive kingdom, the effects of His light and power and grace might be more widely displayed, and His victory over Satan might be attended with greater glory through the multitude of His conquests. It was also necessary for many ages to pass after Moses before Christ came, so that the

church formed through Moses could be prepared for His coming — through the Messiah being long foreshadowed, being foretold in many ways, and being long awaited. It was not fitting for Christ to come before the Babylonian captivity, because Satan's kingdom had not yet reached its peak. The heathen world before that time consisted of smaller kingdoms. But God determined that the Messiah should come during the era of one of the four great world empires. Nor was it fitting for Him to come during the Babylonian empire — God's will was that several successive world empires should follow one another, and that the Messiah's coming should fall in the era of the last and greatest. The Persian empire, by overcoming the Babylonian, surpassed it. The Greek empire, by overcoming the Persian, surpassed that. And by the same logic, the Roman surpassed the Greek. It was God's will that His Son should appear in the world during this greatest and strongest empire — which was Satan's visible kingdom at its peak — so that by overcoming it He might visibly overcome Satan's kingdom at its most powerful and glorious, and so obtain the most complete triumph over Satan himself.

It was not fitting for Christ to come before the Babylonian captivity for additional reasons. Before that time we had no historical accounts of the state of the heathen world to give us a clear picture of humanity's need for a Savior. Also, before that time learning had not flourished widely, and there had not yet been the opportunity to demonstrate the insufficiency of human learning and wisdom to reform or save humanity. Furthermore, before that time the Jewish people had not yet been scattered throughout the world as they were afterward, and so things had not been prepared in that way for Christ's coming. The necessity of abolishing the Jewish

dispensation was not yet as obvious as it became afterward through the dispersion of the Jewish people. Nor had the dispersion yet prepared the way for the Gospel to be spread as it would afterward. Many other things could be mentioned that show no time before that very moment when Christ actually came would have been the right time for Him to appear in the world to purchase redemption.

III. The next thing to note about the incarnation of Christ is the greatness of this event. Christ's incarnation was a greater and more wonderful thing than anything that had ever come to pass. Only one subsequent event surpassed it — Christ's death. But His incarnation was greater than anything that had ever happened before. The creation of the world was a very great thing — but not as great as the incarnation of Christ. It was a great thing for God to make a creature, but not as great as for God — for the Creator Himself — to become a creature. We have considered many great things accomplished from age to age in the period between the fall and the incarnation of Christ. But God's becoming a man was greater than all of them. When Christ was born, the greatest person who ever was or ever will be born came into the world.

IV. The next thing to note about the incarnation of Christ is the remarkable circumstances surrounding it. He was born of a poor virgin — a devout and holy woman who was poor, as was evident from the offering she brought at her purification. Luke 2:24 records that she offered "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," which refers to Leviticus 5:7: "But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons." This poor virgin was engaged to a man who was himself poor. Though they belonged to the royal family of David — the most

honored family in Israel — and though Joseph was the rightful heir to the throne, the family had fallen to a very low condition. This is pictured in Amos 9:11: "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old."

He was born in the town of Bethlehem, as had been foretold — and God worked a remarkable providence to bring that prophecy to fulfillment through Augustus Caesar's census of the entire Roman world, as recorded in Luke 2. He was born in the most humble of circumstances — in a stable, laid in a manger.

V. I want to note the remarkable events that accompanied this great occasion.

1. The first remarkable event accompanying the incarnation of Christ was the return of the Spirit — which actually began a little before the incarnation itself, given to announce the birth of Christ or of His forerunner John the Baptist. I have already noted how the spirit of prophecy ceased not long after the book of Malachi was written. Visions and direct revelations also ceased around the same time. But now, for this occasion, they were granted again, and the Spirit's work in these ways returned. The first instance of this restoration we have any record of is the vision of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, recorded in Luke 1. The next was the vision given to the Virgin Mary, also in Luke 1. The third was the vision given to Joseph, recorded in Matthew 1. After that, the Spirit was given to Elizabeth, as Luke 1:41 records. Then to Mary, as her song shows in Luke 1:46 and following. Then to Zechariah again, in the same passage, verse 64. Then it was sent to the shepherds, as recorded in Luke 2:9. Then it was given to Simeon, Luke

2:25. Then to Anna, verse 36. Then to the wise men in the east. Then to Joseph again, directing him to flee to Egypt, and afterward directing his return.

2. The next accompanying event to note is the attention Christ's incarnation received in heaven and on earth. The glorious inhabitants of heaven took notice of it with joyful songs, heard by the shepherds in the night. This was the greatest event of Providence the angels had ever witnessed. We read of them singing praises when they saw the formation of this lower world in Job 38:7: "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And just as they sang at creation, they sang on a far greater occasion — the birth of the Son of God, who is the Creator of the world.

The glorious angels had been waiting for this event throughout all of history. They had paid close attention to the prophecies and promises of it all along — for we are told in 1 Peter 1:12 that the angels long to look into the things of redemption. Throughout all the stages of redemption since the very fall of man, they had served as Christ's ministers in this work. We read of them being employed in God's dealings with Abraham, with Jacob, and with the Israelites at various points. They had long joyfully anticipated Christ's coming, and now they see it accomplished — and so they greatly rejoice and sing praises on this occasion.

Among the Jewish people, it was noticed — by Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary even before Christ's birth. We might even say by John the Baptist before he was born, when he leaped in his mother's womb as if for joy at the sound of Mary's greeting. Elizabeth and Mary praise God together with great joy when they meet — each carrying Christ or His forerunner in her womb, and

the Holy Spirit in her soul. And afterward, what joyful attention is given to this event by the shepherds and by those devout people — Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna! How they all praise God on this occasion! In this way the church of God in heaven and the church on earth are, as it were, united in joy and praise.

It was noticed by the Gentiles as well, as seen in the wise men from the east. A great part of the universe took notice with joy of the incarnation of Christ. Heaven took notice, and its inhabitants sang for joy. This lower world — the world of humanity — also took notice, both among Jews and Gentiles. God was pleased to honor His Son by remarkably moving some of the wisest among the Gentiles to travel a great distance to see and worship the Son of God at His birth. They were led by a miraculous star to the glorious person who is the bright and morning star, and it went before them and led them to the very place where the child was. Some believe they were informed by the prophecy of Balaam, who was in the eastern regions and foretold Christ's coming as a star that would rise from Jacob. Or they may have been moved by the widespread expectation of the Messiah's coming that had spread throughout the world, which came from the Jewish people's knowledge of the prophecies through their dispersal to all parts of the world.

3. The next event accompanying the incarnation was Christ's circumcision. This can more fittingly be discussed under another heading, so I will not pause on it here.

4. The next accompanying event was His first coming into the second temple — His being brought there as an infant at the time of the Virgin Mary's purification. Haggai 2:7 had promised: "The desire of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory."

And Malachi 3:1 had said: "The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming." This was the first fulfillment of those prophecies.

5. The last accompanying event I will mention is the departing of the scepter from Judah, at the death of Herod the Great. The scepter had never completely left Judah until now. Judah's authority had been significantly reduced when the ten tribes broke away in Jeroboam's time, and the scepter departed from Israel — the northern kingdom — when Shalmaneser carried the ten tribes into captivity. But the scepter had still remained in the tribe of Judah through the kings of the house of David. When the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, the authority of Judah was interrupted briefly until the return from captivity under Cyrus. After the return, though they were no longer independent as they had been but owed allegiance to the Persian kings, they were still governed by their own people, who held the power of life and death and governed by their own laws. So Judah still had authority of its own throughout the Persian and Greek periods. Toward the end of the Greek period, the people were ruled by their own kings from the line of the Maccabees for most of a hundred years. After that they were subdued by the Romans, but the Romans still allowed them to be governed by their own laws and to have a king of their own. Herod the Great reigned about forty years with genuine royal authority, paying tribute to the Romans. But shortly after Christ was born, Herod died, as Matthew 2:19 records. Archelaus succeeded him but was soon removed by the Roman emperor, and then the scepter departed from Judah. After that there were no more earthly kings of Judah, and the people no

longer had governors from their own ranks. They were ruled by a Roman governor sent among them, and they lost the power of capital punishment. This is why the Jewish leaders said to Pilate, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," as John 18:31 records. So the scepter departed from Judah when Shiloh came.

PART 2



Having considered Christ's coming into the world and His taking on our nature in order to qualify Himself to purchase redemption, I come now, second, to speak of the purchase itself. In speaking of this I will:

1. Explain what is meant by the purchase of redemption.
2. Note some things in general about how this purchase was made.
3. Consider in order the specific things Christ did and suffered by which this purchase was made.

SECTION 1



I want to explain what is meant by Christ's purchasing redemption. Two things are meant by it: His satisfaction and His merit. Everything is accomplished through the price Christ paid. That price does two things: it pays our debt — and so it satisfies. And by its intrinsic value, and by the agreement between the Father and the Son, it obtains a title to happiness for us — and so it merits. The satisfaction of Christ frees us from misery; the merit of Christ purchases happiness for us.

The word purchase, as used in connection with Christ's work, is used in either a narrower or a broader sense. It is often used in the narrower sense to refer only to Christ's merit, and sometimes in the broader sense to include both His satisfaction and His merit. In fact, most of the terms used in this area of theology carry more than one meaning. Theologians sometimes use merit to refer to the entire price Christ offered — both the satisfactory element and the positively meritorious element. And the word satisfaction is sometimes used not only for His atoning work but also for His obedient life. In some sense, not only bearing the penalty but actively obeying is necessary to satisfy the law. The reason these terms are used in overlapping ways seems to be that satisfaction and merit do not differ so much in substance as in relation. Both consist in paying a

price of infinite value. The difference is only this: that price, considered in relation to a debt that must be paid, is called satisfaction; considered in relation to a positive good that must be obtained, it is called merit. The difference between paying a debt and making a purchase is more a matter of perspective than of essential substance. The person who pays a price to discharge a debt does in some sense make a purchase — he purchases freedom from the obligation. And the person who pays a price to obtain something good does in some sense make satisfaction — he satisfies the conditions set by the one to whom he pays. This is sufficient to explain what is meant by the purchase of Christ.

SECTION 2



I now proceed to some general observations about the things by which this purchase was made.

1. Whatever in Christ had the nature of satisfaction did so by virtue of the suffering or humiliation contained in it. And whatever had the nature of merit did so by virtue of the obedience or righteousness in it. Christ's satisfaction consists in His answering the demands of the law upon man that arose as a result of man's breaking the law. These demands were answered by bearing the law's penalty. Christ's merit consists in what He did to fulfill the demands of the law that existed before man broke it — the demand for obedience.

Christ's satisfaction consists either in His suffering or in His submission to humiliation. For Christ made satisfaction not only through literal suffering but through whatever partook of the nature of humiliation and lowered circumstances. Thus Christ made satisfaction for sin by remaining under the power of death while His body lay in the grave — even though neither His body nor soul endured any suffering after death. Whatever Christ was subject to that was a judicial consequence of sin had the nature of satisfaction for sin. And not only literal suffering, but all lowering and de-

pression of the human state below its original honor and dignity — such as His body remaining under death, body and soul remaining separated, and similar things — are judicial consequences of sin. Everything Christ did in His state of humiliation that had the nature of obedience, moral virtue, or goodness was in some respect meritorious — it was part of the price by which He purchased happiness for the elect.

2. Both Christ's satisfaction for sin and His meriting happiness through His righteousness were carried on throughout the entire period of His humiliation. Christ's satisfaction for sin was not accomplished only through His final sufferings — though those were the principal means. All His sufferings and all the humiliation He endured from the first moment of His incarnation to His resurrection were propitiatory and satisfactory in nature. His satisfaction was chiefly through His death because His suffering and humiliation there were greatest. But all His other sufferings and all His other humiliations throughout His life were also satisfactory in nature. This includes the humble circumstances into which He was born. His being born in such a lowly condition was part of making satisfaction for sin. His being born of a poor virgin in a stable, being laid in a manger, taking on human nature in its weakened condition under the effects of the fall, being born in the form of sinful flesh — all of this had the nature of satisfaction. So too did all His sufferings in infancy and childhood, all the labor, contempt, rejection, temptation, and hardship of any kind throughout His entire life — all of it was propitiatory and satisfactory.

And His purchase of happiness through His righteousness was likewise carried on throughout the entire period of His humiliation until His resurrection — not only through the obedience He per-

formed throughout the course of His life, but also through the obedience He performed in laying down His life.

3. Christ both satisfied God's justice and purchased eternal happiness through the same acts. These two things — His satisfaction and His meriting — were not only both carried on throughout His humiliation, they were accomplished through the very same things. He did not make satisfaction through some acts and work out righteousness through entirely different acts. Rather, in the same acts by which He worked out righteousness, He also made satisfaction — only the relationship is different. One and the same act of Christ, considered in terms of the obedience in it, was part of His righteousness and purchased heaven. The same act, considered in terms of the self-denial, difficulty, and humiliation with which He performed it, had the nature of satisfaction for sin and secured our pardon. His going about doing good — preaching the Gospel and teaching His disciples — was part of His righteousness and purchase of heaven, as it was done in obedience to the Father. The same activity was part of His satisfaction, since He performed it with great labor, trouble, weariness, and under severe temptation, exposing Himself to reproach and contempt. His laying down His life had the nature of satisfaction to God's offended justice, considered as His bearing our punishment in our place. But considered as an act of obedience to God — who had commanded Him to lay down His life for sinners — it was also part of His righteousness and purchase of heaven, and as central to His righteousness as it was to His satisfaction. To take another example: what He endured in His circumcision had the nature of satisfaction — the blood shed in His circumcision was propitiatory blood. But as an act of conformity to the law of Moses, it was also part of His meri-

torious righteousness. Though the act was not properly performed by His human will — since He was an infant — it was nevertheless the experience of that human nature and the act of that person, and was therefore accepted as an act of obedience on His part as our mediator.

Even His being born in such a humble condition had the nature of satisfaction through the humiliation it involved, and also the nature of righteousness — as it was the act of His person in obedience to the Father, what His human nature was subject to, and what the will of the human nature consented to. Even though there was no prior act of human will before that birth.

These observations are sufficient as a general account of the purchase Christ made of redemption.

SECTION 3



I now turn to speak more specifically about what Christ did and experienced during the time of His humiliation — the things by which this purchase was made. The nature of Christ's purchase, as explained above, leads us to consider these things from two angles:

First, with respect to the righteousness He displayed in them.

Second, with respect to the suffering and humiliation He was subject to in them on our behalf.

I will consider what occurred during the time of Christ's humiliation with respect to the obedience and righteousness He exercised in it. This is organized under three headings. I will consider His obedience:

First, with respect to the laws He obeyed.

Second, with respect to the different stages of His life in which He performed it.

Third, with respect to the virtues He exercised in His obedience.

The first way of organizing Christ's righteous acts is with respect to the laws He obeyed in that righteousness. All the commands Christ obeyed can be gathered under one law — what the apostle Paul calls the law of works in Romans 3:27. Every command Christ obeyed can be traced back to that great and eternal law of God contained in the covenant of works — the eternal standard of right that God established between Himself and humanity. Christ came into the world to fulfill and satisfy the covenant of works — the covenant that stands forever as the standard of judgment, the covenant humanity had broken, and the covenant that had to be fulfilled.

This law of works includes all the laws God has ever given to humanity, for it is a basic rule of the law of works — and indeed of the law of nature — that God is to be obeyed and that we must submit to whatever positive command He chooses to give us. It is a rule of the law of works that people should obey their earthly parents, and it is certainly just as much a rule of that same law that we should obey our heavenly Father. The law of works therefore requires obedience to all of God's positive commands. It required Adam's obedience to the command not to eat the forbidden fruit, and it required the Jewish people's obedience to all the positive commands of their institutions. When God commanded Jonah to rise and go to Nineveh, the law of works required him to obey — and in the same way it required Christ's obedience to all the positive commands God gave Him.

More specifically, the commands of God that Christ obeyed fell into three categories: those He was subject to simply as a man, those He was subject to as a Jew, and those He was subject to purely as Mediator.

First, He obeyed those commands He was subject to simply as a man. These were the commands of the moral law — the same law given at Mount Sinai written on two tablets of stone, which is binding on all people of all nations in every age.

Second, He obeyed all the laws He was subject to as a Jew. This included the ceremonial law, which He conformed to — being circumcised on the eighth day and going up to Jerusalem to the temple three times a year, at least from the age of twelve, which appears to have been when Jewish males began going to the temple. Christ also regularly attended the services of the temple and the synagogues.

His submission to John's baptism also falls under this heading — His obedience to the laws He was subject to as a Jew. God gave a special command to the Jewish people to go out to John the Baptist and be baptized by him, and since Christ was a Jew, He was subject to this command. When He came to be baptized by John and John objected — saying Christ should be baptizing him instead — Christ gave this reason: it was necessary for Him to do it in order to fulfill all righteousness. See Matthew 3:13-15.

Third, Christ was also subject to the mediatorial law — those commands of God that applied to Him not simply as a man or as a Jew, but specifically in relation to His office as Mediator. These included the Father's commands to Him to teach certain doctrines, to preach the Gospel, to perform miracles, to call certain disciples, to establish certain ordinances, and ultimately to lay down His life. He did all of these things in obedience to commands He had received from the Father, as He repeatedly tells us. These commands did not apply to Him simply as a man — they were not given to other men. Nor did they come to Him as a Jew — they were not

part of the Mosaic law. They were commands the Father had given Him that related directly to the work He was to accomplish in the world as Mediator.

It is important to note that Christ's righteousness — through which He merited heaven for Himself and for all who believe in Him — consists primarily in His obedience to this mediatorial law. Fulfilling this law was His chief work and purpose in the world. The accounts in the Gospels are primarily records of His obedience to this law, and this part of His obedience was the most difficult of all. Therefore His obedience in this area was most meritorious. What Christ was required to do by virtue of being the Mediator was infinitely more demanding than what was required of Him simply as a man or as a Jew. His obedience to this mediatorial law includes His endurance of His final sufferings — beginning with His agony in the garden and ending with His resurrection.

Just as the obedience of the first Adam — in which his righteousness would have consisted if he had stood — would have consisted primarily not in his obedience to the moral law as a man, but in his obedience to the special command he was subject to as the moral head and representative of humanity (the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), so the obedience of the second Adam consists primarily not in His obedience to the law He was subject to simply as a man, but in His obedience to the special law He was subject to in His office as Mediator and substitute for humanity.

Before moving to the next category of Christ's righteousness, I want to note three things about His obedience to these laws.

First, His obedience was perfect in every respect. It was universal with respect to the kinds of laws He was subject to — He obeyed all three categories. It was universal with respect to every individual command within those laws, and it was perfect in obeying each one. It was perfect in avoiding transgression: He never violated a single command; He was guilty of no sin of commission. It was perfect in performing what was required: He fully completed every duty commanded and was never guilty of any sin of omission. It was perfect in the principles from which He obeyed: His heart and motives were entirely right; there was no corruption in Him. It was perfect in the ends He pursued: He never acted for mixed motives or hidden purposes but aimed exactly at the ends God's law requires. It was perfect in the manner of performance: every detail of each act was perfectly in conformity with the command. It was perfect in the degree of performance: He acted fully up to the standard in every case. It was perfect in consistency: He did not obey perfectly only sometimes but constantly and without interruption. It was perfect in perseverance: He held to perfect obedience all the way to the end, through all the changes He passed through and all the trials He faced.

The merit of Christ's obedience depends on its perfection. If it had fallen short in any single point, it could not have been meritorious. An imperfect obedience is no obedience at all in the sight of the law of works — which was the law Christ was subject to — because what does not fully satisfy the law cannot be counted as obedience to it.

Second, Christ's obedience was performed through the greatest trials and temptations anyone has ever faced. His obedience was accompanied by the greatest difficulty, the most extreme humilia-

tion, and the most severe suffering ever endured. This is another factor that made it all the more meritorious and praiseworthy. Obeying when a command is easy is not nearly as worthy as obeying when it can only be done at great cost.

Third, He performed this obedience with infinite regard for God and the honor of His law. The obedience He rendered was accompanied by incomparably greater love for God and respect for His authority than the angels bring to their obedience. The angels obey with perfect, sinless love — yet Christ's obedience was marked by far greater love than theirs, even infinite love. Although Christ's human nature was not capable of love that is infinite in an absolute sense, His obedience performed in that human nature is not to be regarded as merely the obedience of His human nature but as the obedience of His person as the God-man. In that obedience the infinite love of Christ's person was displayed. Together with the infinite dignity of the person who obeyed, this rendered His obedience infinitely meritorious.

The second way of organizing Christ's obedience is with respect to the different stages of His life in which it was performed. In this respect it divides into what He did during His private life and what He did during His public ministry.

First, what He did during His private life. He was perfectly obedient throughout His childhood. He was infinitely different from other children, who begin to sin and rebel as soon as they are capable of acting. He was subject to His earthly parents, though He was Lord of all, as Luke 2:51 records. He was found in the temple attending to His Father's business at the age of twelve, as Luke 2:42 shows. At that age He began the work the Father had given Him, in fulfillment of the mediatorial law. He continued His pri-

vate life for about thirty years, living in Nazareth in the house of Joseph, His reputed father, where He served God in a private capacity and worked as a carpenter.

Second, what He did during His public ministry, which began when He was about thirty years old and continued for the final three and a half years of His life. Most of the Gospel accounts cover this period of three and a half years — including all of Matthew except the first two chapters, the entire Gospel of Mark, all of John, and all of Luke except the first two chapters (and in all four Gospels, setting aside what relates to the ministry of John the Baptist). Christ's first appearing in His public ministry is what Scripture often calls His coming. This is why John speaks of Christ's coming as still future even though He had already been born.

Concerning Christ's public ministry, I want to note the following things. First, its forerunner. Second, the manner in which He first entered upon it. Third, the works He was engaged in throughout the course of it; and Fourth, the manner in which He brought it to a close.

1. The forerunner of Christ's coming in His public ministry was John the Baptist. He came preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins, to prepare the way for Christ's coming — in fulfillment of the prophecies about him in Isaiah 40:3-5 and Matthew 4:5-6. John the Baptist is thought to have begun his ministry about three and a half years before Christ began His. Together, John's ministry and Christ's made up seven years — the final week of Daniel's seventy weeks. This is the period referred to in Daniel 9:27: "He will confirm the covenant with many for one week." Christ came in the middle of this week — at the beginning of the last half, the final

three and a half years, as Daniel foretold in the same verse: "And in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering." John the Baptist's ministry consisted primarily in preaching the law — awakening people, convicting them of sin, and preparing their hearts for the coming of Christ — for the law prepares the heart to receive the Gospel.

A remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God accompanied John's ministry. The result was that Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan were stirred, convicted, came out to him, and submitted to baptism confessing their sins. John is described as the greatest of all the prophets who came before Christ, as Matthew 11:11 says: "Among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist" — meaning he held the most honorable office. He was like the morning star — the herald of the approaching day, the forerunner of the rising sun. The earlier prophets were stars giving light in the night. We have seen how those stars faded as the Gospel day approached. But now, with Christ's coming very near, the morning star appeared before Him — the brightest of all the stars, as John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets.

When Christ entered His public ministry, the light of that morning star faded too — just as the sun's rising diminishes the light of the morning star. John the Baptist himself said, as John 3:30 records, "He must increase, but I must decrease." And shortly after Christ began His public ministry, John the Baptist was put to death — just as the morning star is visible briefly after sunrise but soon disappears.

2. The next thing to note is Christ's entrance into His public ministry, which was through His baptism, followed by the temptation in the wilderness. His baptism was, in effect, His solemn inauguration into His ministry — accompanied by His being anointed with the Holy Spirit in a visible and formal way, the Spirit descending upon Him in the visible form of a dove, with a voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," as Matthew 3:16-17 records.

After this He was led out to the wilderness where the devil attacked Him. Satan launched a fierce assault on Him at the very start of His public work, subjecting Him to a remarkable test of His obedience — but Christ won the victory. The one who had succeeded so devastatingly with the first Adam had no success at all with the second.

3. I want to note the work Christ was engaged in during His ministry. Three things are chiefly worth noting: His preaching, His miracles, and His calling and appointing disciples and ministers of His kingdom.

(1.) His preaching of the Gospel. A large part of His public ministry consisted in this, and much of the obedience by which He purchased salvation for us was in His speaking the things the Father commanded Him. He revealed the mind and will of God more clearly and fully than it had ever been revealed before. He came from the very presence of the Father, perfectly knew His mind, and was uniquely qualified to reveal it. As the sun begins to shine as soon as it rises, so Christ began to enlighten the world with His teaching as soon as He entered His public ministry. Just

as the law was given at Mount Sinai, Christ delivered His Gospel teaching — full of blessing, not of curses — to a multitude on a mountain, as recorded in Matthew 5 through 7.

When He preached, He did not teach as the scribes did — He taught as one who had authority, so that His hearers were astonished at His teaching. He did not reveal the mind and will of God in the way the prophets had spoken — speaking not their own words but another's, and using phrases like "Thus says the Lord." Instead Christ spoke in phrases like "I say to you" — "Truly, truly, I say to you." He presented His teachings not merely as God the Father's doctrines, but as His own. He gave His commands not as the prophets used to give commands — as God's commands delivered through them — but as His own commands. He spoke in phrases like "This is My commandment" in John 15:12, and "You are My friends if you do what I command you" in verse 14.

(2.) Another work Christ was engaged in throughout His ministry was performing miracles. Several things deserve notice about these.

Their sheer number. Beyond the specific instances recorded, we repeatedly read of crowds coming to Him at once with all kinds of diseases, and His healing them all.

They were acts of mercy. Through them He displayed not only His infinite power and greatness but His infinite mercy and goodness. He went about doing good — healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to those who were lame. He fed the hungry, cleansed those with leprosy, and raised the dead.

Nearly all of His miracles were works that had been specifically associated with God Himself in the Old Testament. Stilling the sea — Psalm 107:29: "He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed." Walking on the sea in a storm — Job 9:8: "Who alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea." Driving out demons — Psalm 74:14: "You crushed the heads of Leviathan." Feeding a multitude in the wilderness — Deuteronomy 8:16: "In the wilderness He fed you manna." Knowing the thoughts of men — Amos 4:13: "He who declares to man what are His thoughts — the Lord God of hosts is His name." Raising the dead — Psalm 68:20: "To God the Lord belong escapes from death." Opening the eyes of the blind — Psalm 146:8: "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind." Healing the sick — Psalm 103:3: "Who heals all your diseases." Lifting up those who are bent down — Psalm 146:8: "The Lord raises up those who are bowed down."

In general, His miracles were pictures of the great work He came to do in the human heart — representing the inward spiritual cleansing, healing, renewal, and resurrection that all His redeemed people experience.

He performed these miracles in a way that made clear He was acting by His own power, not by the power of another as the prophets had done. The other prophets always performed their miracles in the name of the Lord. But Christ worked in His own name. Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan because his words seemed to take credit for only one miracle as if by his own power. Nor did Christ work miracles as the apostles did — they performed them all in Christ's name. He performed them by His own author-

ity and will: saying, for example, "I am willing; be cleansed," in Matthew 8:3, and asking, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" in Matthew 9:28.

(3.) Another thing Christ did during His ministry was to call His disciples. He called many followers. He sent out seventy disciples at one point to do His work, but He set apart twelve as apostles — the principal ministers of His kingdom and, in a sense, the twelve foundations of His church. See Revelation 21:14. These were the chief instruments of establishing His kingdom in the world, and therefore shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

4. I want to note how He brought His ministry to its close. He did this

(1.) By giving His parting counsel to His disciples and to all who would ever be His disciples — recorded in detail in John 14 through 16.

(2.) By establishing a lasting memorial of His death — the Lord's Supper, in which the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood are represented.

(3.) By offering Himself as God's high priest — a sacrifice to God in His final sufferings. He did this as God's appointed servant and anointed priest, and it was the greatest act of His public ministry — the greatest act of His obedience, by which He purchased heaven for all who believe. The priests of old performed many other duties as God's ministers, but they were most fully exercising their office at the moment of actually offering sacrifice on the altar. So the greatest thing Christ did in the exercise of His priestly office — the greatest thing He ever did, the greatest thing that has ever

been done — was offering Himself as a sacrifice to God. In this He was the fulfillment of everything done by all the priests in all their sacrifices and offerings since the beginning of the world.

III. The third way of organizing the acts by which Christ purchased redemption is with respect to the virtues He exercised and displayed in them. Christ, in doing the work He came to do for our redemption, exercised every possible virtue and grace. There are some specific virtues that sinful people can have that were not present in Christ — not because He was lacking in any virtue, but because His virtue was perfect and without defect. These include repentance, a broken heart over sin, and the mortification and denial of sinful desires. These virtues were absent in Christ not because He lacked virtue but because He had no sin of His own to repent of and no sinful desire to resist. But every virtue that does not presuppose sin was present in Him, and to a greater degree than in any other man or created being. Every virtue in Him was perfect. Virtue itself was greater in Him than in anyone else, and it had greater opportunity to shine in Him than in anyone else. Authentic virtue shows most brightly when most tested — and no one's virtue was ever tested as Christ's was.

The virtues Christ exercised in His work can be grouped into three kinds: those that directly relate to God, those that directly relate to Himself, and those that directly relate to other people.

1. The virtues that directly relate to God were displayed in Christ in the work He did for our redemption. He showed a holy fear and reverence toward God the Father. His virtue in this respect was tested more severely than anyone else's, because of His own personal greatness. This was the very temptation that caused the angels who fell to fall — the temptation to discard worship and

reverence for God, because they themselves were beings of such exalted dignity and worth. But Christ was infinitely greater and more worthy than they — for He was the eternal Son of God, equal in person to God the Father. And yet, having taken on the office of Mediator and the nature of man, He was full of reverence toward God. He worshiped Him in the most reverent manner, again and again. He also displayed a wonderful love for God. The angels bear great witness to their love for God through their constant and eager performance of His will. Many saints have given great evidence of their love through the labors and sufferings they have endured for God. But no one has ever given testimony of love for God like Christ — no one has ever performed a labor of love so great as His, or suffered so much out of love for God. He also showed the most wonderful submission to the will of God that has ever been seen. No one's submission was ever tested as His was. And He showed the most extraordinary spirit of obedience ever displayed.

2. In this work Christ also displayed in a wonderful way those virtues that most directly relate to Himself — particularly humility, patience, and contempt for worldly glory. Though Christ was the most excellent and honorable of all people, He was also the most humble — indeed the most humble of all creatures. No angel or human being has ever matched Him in humility, even though He surpassed all created beings in dignity and honor. Christ would have been under the greatest imaginable temptation to pride, if anything could have been a temptation to Him. The temptation that caused the fallen angels to fall was the dignity of their nature and the greatness of their standing. But Christ was infinitely more honorable than they. His human nature was so exalted as to be united in one person with the eternal Son of God, who is equal

with the Father — and yet that human nature was not at all inflated with pride. Nor was the man Christ Jesus lifted up with pride by all the wonderful works He performed — healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, restoring limbs to the lame, and raising the dead. Though He knew God had appointed Him as ruler over heaven and earth, angels and men, as He says in Matthew 11:27, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father" — though He knew He was an infinitely honorable person and did not regard equality with God as something to exploit — and though He knew He was the heir of God the Father's kingdom — yet such was His humility that He did not refuse to be brought down into lower and more degraded circumstances and sufferings than any other elect creature has ever endured. He became the least and lowest of all. True humility is proved and demonstrated by willingly descending to very low and deeply humbling acts and conditions when called to do so. But no one has ever stooped so low as Christ — whether we consider the infinite height He stooped from, or the depths to which He descended. Such was His humility that, though He knew His infinite worthiness to be honored far more than the greatest earthly king or angel in heaven, when the time came He did not consider it too much to be bound as a condemned criminal, to be mocked and spat upon by the vilest of men, to be crowned with thorns and dressed in a mockery of royal robes, to be crucified like a slave and treated as the meanest and most despised of outcasts — as one accursed by God and humanity, unfit to live on earth. And He endured all this not for Himself but for some of the most degraded creatures alive — the very people who crucified Him. Was this not a wonderful display of humility, when He freely and willingly accepted this degradation?

How His patience shone under all the terrible suffering He endured — silent and not opening His mouth, going as a lamb to the slaughter, patient as a lamb under all He suffered from beginning to end.

What contempt He showed for worldly glory — choosing humiliation, lowliness, and suffering rather than accepting a temporal crown and the external splendors of an earthly prince, as the crowds so often urged Him to do.

3. In the work He accomplished, Christ also displayed in a wonderful way those virtues that most directly relate to other people. These can be summed up under two headings: meekness and love.

Christ's meekness was His quiet, humble composure of spirit in the face of the provocations He encountered. No one has ever faced such provocations as He did. The greatness of a provocation is determined by two things: the degree of opposition given, and the degree to which that opposition is unjust and undeserved — how completely causeless it is, and how much the person deserved the opposite treatment. If we consider both of these, no one who has ever lived encountered anything close to the provocation Christ faced. Consider how intensely He was hated, the abuse He suffered from the cruelest of men, the severity of the mistreatment, and the spite and contempt behind it. Then consider how completely unjustified all of it was — how utterly undeserving He was of it, and how much He deserved the opposite — love, honor, and gratitude. No one else has ever faced a thousandth part of the provocation He did. And yet how meek He was through it all. How composed and still His spirit remained. Far from agitation or disturbance. When insulted, He did not insult in return. Like a sheep

before its shearers He was silent, and did not open His mouth. There was no sign of a vengeful spirit — quite the opposite: He showed a spirit of forgiveness. At the highest moment of provocation anyone had ever committed against Him — as they nailed Him to the cross — He fervently prayed for their forgiveness. Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

No one has ever displayed such love for humanity. The love for people that Christ showed while on earth — and especially in going through His final sufferings and offering up His life and soul — was His greatest act of love and was entirely without parallel. Some of the saints have shown remarkable love — the apostle Paul, the apostle John, and others — but Christ's love for humanity as displayed during His life on earth surpassed all of theirs as the ocean surpasses a small stream.

It is worth noting that all the virtues that appeared in Christ shone most brilliantly at the end of His life, under the trials He faced there. Outstanding virtue always shows most brightly in the fire. Pure gold reveals its purity most in the furnace. It was chiefly under the trials of the closing period of His life that His love for God, His honor of God's majesty, His concern for the honor of God's law, His spirit of obedience, His humility, His contempt for the world, His patience, His meekness, and His spirit of forgiveness toward others were most clearly seen. Indeed everything Christ did to work out redemption for us is most fully seen at the end of His life. Here is the heart of His satisfaction for sin, here is the chief ground of His merit of eternal life for sinners, and here most clearly shines the example He has set for us to follow.

We have now briefly examined the things by which the purchase of redemption was made, looking at the righteousness Christ displayed in them. I turn now to the second aspect.

Section 2 considers the same acts from the angle of the satisfaction Christ made for sin — that is, the sufferings and humiliation He endured in them on our behalf.

1. Christ was subject to remarkable humiliation and suffering in His infancy. He was born for the purpose of dying, and so in a sense He began to die the moment He was born. His mother suffered in an extraordinary way in giving birth to Him. When her labor came, there was no room at the inn, as Luke 2:7 records. She was forced to take shelter in a stable, and so Christ was born in a place meant for animals. In this way He suffered in His very birth as though He were lower than a man — as though He did not possess the dignity of human nature but belonged to the rank of beasts. We can also reasonably conclude that His mother's circumstances were cramped and difficult in other respects, and that she lacked the basic provisions normally available for a newborn. Without a doubt the infant suffered much as a result.

Beyond this, He was persecuted as an infant. People began seeking His life from the moment He was born. Herod, the leading ruler of the land, was so set against Him that he killed all the children in Bethlehem and its surrounding regions, every boy two years old and younger. Christ suffered exile as an infant — He was driven out of His homeland into Egypt, and He undoubtedly suffered greatly from being carried on such a long journey, at so young an age, into a foreign country.

2. Christ was subject to great humiliation during His private life at Nazareth. He lived there in lowly obscurity, engaged in hard, ordinary labor. Scripture calls Him not only the carpenter's son but the carpenter Himself: Mark 6:3 — 'Is not this the carpenter, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?' He earned His bread through hard labor before He ate it, enduring the very curse God pronounced on Adam in Genesis 3:19: 'By the sweat of your face you will eat bread.' Consider what a degree of humiliation it was for the glorious Son of God — the creator of heaven and earth — to spend about thirty years living a private, obscure life among working men, overlooked by the world as nothing more than an ordinary laborer. In some ways Christ's humiliation was actually greater during His private life than during His public ministry. During His ministry, His glory broke through in the words He preached and the miracles He performed. But for the first thirty years of His life He lived among ordinary people in near-total silence, with no display of His glory and nothing to distinguish Him from any common craftsman — except the spotless purity and outstanding holiness of His life, which itself remained largely hidden in obscurity. He was largely unnoticed until after His baptism.

3. Christ was also subject to great humiliation and suffering during His public life — from His baptism until the night He was betrayed. Specifically:

1. He suffered great poverty. He had nowhere to lay His head, as Matthew 8:20 says, and He commonly lodged outdoors in the open air for lack of shelter. This is clear when you compare Matthew 8:20, John 18:1-2, Luke 21:37, and Luke 22:39 together. The words spoken of Christ in Song of Solomon 5:2 — 'My head is drenched with dew, my locks with the drops of the night' — were

literally fulfilled. Because of His poverty He was undoubtedly often hungry, thirsty, and cold. We read in Matthew 4:2 that He was hungry, and again in Matthew 21:18. His mother and relatives were poor and unable to help Him. He was supported by the generosity of some of His disciples throughout His life. Luke 8 at the beginning tells of certain women who followed Him and supported Him out of their own means. He was so poor that He could not pay the required tribute without a miracle — a fish came to Him carrying the coin in its mouth. See Matthew 17:27. When He ate His last Passover, it was not at His own expense but at someone else's, as Luke 22:7 and following makes clear. Because of His poverty He had no tomb of His own to be buried in. It was the Jewish custom, unless a person was very poor, to prepare a burial tomb during their lifetime. But Christ owned no land of His own, though He was the ruler of heaven and earth. He was buried through the charity of Joseph of Arimathea, in a tomb Joseph had prepared for himself.

2. He suffered great hatred and contempt. He was despised and rejected by people. Most regarded Him as a poor, insignificant man — looked down on for His lowly background and His hometown of Nazareth. He was mocked as a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He was called a deceiver of the people, a madman, a Samaritan, and one possessed by a demon — as in John 7:20, John 8:48, and John 10:20. He was charged with blasphemy and widely regarded as a sorcerer who performed miracles by dark arts and through Beelzebub. They excommunicated Him and agreed to excommunicate anyone who acknowledged Him, as John 9:22 records. They wished Him dead and were constantly plotting to kill Him — sometimes by force, sometimes by

scheming. They repeatedly took up stones to stone Him, and once led Him to the edge of a cliff intending to throw Him down onto the rocks below.

This hatred and contempt came from His own people — those who were outwardly God's covenant nation. John 1:11 says, 'He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.' He was especially despised and hated by those held in the highest regard — the leading men of the nation. And the hatred directed at Him was widespread. Wherever He went throughout the land, He met with hatred and contempt. He encountered it in Capernaum, in Jericho, in Jerusalem the holy city, in the temple itself when He went to worship, and even in Nazareth — His own hometown — among His own relatives and former neighbors.

3. He also suffered the attacks of Satan in an extraordinary way. We read of one occasion in particular when He engaged in a prolonged conflict with the devil — forty days in the wilderness, surrounded by nothing but wild animals and evil spirits. During this time He was so exposed to the devil's power that he was physically carried from place to place by him, while already in a deeply suffering condition.

That covers the humiliation and suffering of Christ's public life from His baptism to the night He was betrayed.

4. I come now to His final humiliation and sufferings — from the evening of the night He was betrayed until His resurrection. This was His greatest humiliation and suffering, and it is chiefly through this that He made satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of people. First, His life was sold by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of silver — the price set for a servant's life, as

Exodus 21:32 shows. Then He endured that terrible agony in the garden. A dreadful darkness came over His soul. He began to be sorrowful and overwhelmed with grief, saying that His 'soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death,' and that He was 'distressed.' The anguish of His soul was so intense that blood was forced through the pores of His skin. While His soul was crushed with overwhelming sorrow, His body was covered in blood. The disciples, who had been like His close friends and family, appeared cold and indifferent toward Him at the very moment when His Father's face was also hidden from Him. Judas — to whom Christ had shown such great kindness, treating him as one of His own household — came and betrayed Him in the most deceitful and treacherous manner imaginable. The officers and soldiers seized Him and bound Him. His disciples abandoned Him and fled. His closest friends did not stand by Him to offer any comfort in His moment of distress. He was led away like a criminal before the priests and scribes — His bitter, deadly enemies — who sat up through the night for the satisfaction of mocking Him now that they had Him in their power. Their aim was nothing less than His death, so they looked for any justification to condemn Him and searched for witnesses against Him. When no valid witnesses came forward, they brought in false ones. When even the false witnesses contradicted each other, they turned to questioning Him directly, hoping to find something in His own words to use against Him. They hoped He would claim to be the Son of God — then they thought they would have what they needed. When they could not get Him to say it without pressing Him, they adjured Him in the name of God to answer whether He was or not. When He confessed that He was, they believed they had enough. Then their celebration began — they fell

on Him, spat in His face, blindfolded Him, struck Him with their hands, and told Him to prophesy who had hit Him. In this way they ridiculed His claim to be a prophet. Even the servants joined in the abuse, as Mark 14:65 records: 'The servants also beat Him with their hands.'

During the sufferings of that night, Peter — one of His chief disciples — instead of standing by Him in comfort, was ashamed to acknowledge Him and denied and renounced Him with oaths and curses. After the chief priests and elders had spent the night shamefully abusing Him, morning came — the morning of the most remarkable day in history — and they led Him to Pilate to be condemned to death, since they did not have the legal authority to execute anyone themselves. He was brought before Pilate's judgment seat, where the priests and elders accused Him of treason. When Pilate examined the matter and declared he found no fault in Him, the Jews only became more fierce and insistent in demanding His condemnation. Pilate, having cleared Him, then unjustly put Him through a second trial, and again found nothing against Him and acquitted Him. Pilate treated Him as a poor, worthless man, but was too embarrassed to condemn Him as a traitor on such flimsy grounds.

He was then sent to Herod to be tried, and was brought before Herod's judgment seat while His enemies followed and accused Him bitterly. Herod did not condemn Him as a traitor or a would-be king. Like Pilate, he regarded Him as a poor, insignificant man — not worth taking seriously. He found it laughable that the Jews were accusing this man as a threat to Caesar, as someone likely to

rise up as a rival king. So, in mockery, Herod dressed Him in a robe of ridicule, made sport of Him, and sent Him back through the streets of Jerusalem to Pilate still wearing the mock robe.

Then the Jews chose Barabbas over Him and pressed Pilate loudly and violently to crucify Him. So Pilate — though he had cleared Him twice and Herod once — unjustly brought Him to trial a third time, trying to find some sufficient charge for crucifixion. Christ was stripped and flogged — giving His back to those who struck Him. After that, even though Pilate again declared he found no fault in Him, he was so unjust that out of fear of the Jews he handed Christ over to be crucified. But before the sentence was carried out, His spiteful enemies seized the opportunity to mock Him again — gathering around Him and making a deliberate occasion of it. They stripped Him, put a scarlet robe on Him, placed a reed in His hand, and pressed a crown of thorns onto His head. Both Jews and Roman soldiers united in the mockery, kneeling before Him and crying in derision, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' They also spat on Him, took the reed from His hand, and struck Him on the head with it. After this they led Him away to be crucified and made Him carry His own cross, until He collapsed under its weight from exhaustion. Then they laid it on a man named Simon of Cyrene.

When they finally arrived at Mount Calvary, they carried out the sentence Pilate had so unjustly pronounced. They nailed Him to the cross through His hands and feet, raised it upright, and drove one end into the ground, leaving Him suspended by the nails. Now Christ's sufferings reached their most extreme point. The cup He had prayed so earnestly would pass from Him had come — and He drank it. In those days crucifixion was the most agonizing form of execution known. No other form of death caused

a person to die by sheer torment to the same degree — and indeed the Latin word for torment itself comes from this kind of death. But beyond the excruciating physical pain of His death, He endured vastly greater suffering in His soul. This was the travail of His soul spoken of by the prophet. Now it pleased God to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. Now He poured out His soul unto death, as Isaiah 53 describes. If merely anticipating this cup caused Him to sweat blood, how much more dreadful and agonizing must the actual drinking of it have been. Many martyrs have endured great physical suffering with joyful souls, singing for joy — and that inward joy sustained them through their outward pain, allowing them to triumph over it. This was not the case with Christ. He had no such support. His sufferings were primarily those of the soul, though the physical suffering was also extreme. During His crucifixion Christ did not sweat blood as He had in the garden — not because His agony was less, but because His blood was now being shed through the wounds in His body. But even without sweating blood, the suffering of His soul was so severe that it apparently ruptured something within Him — which seems likely from the fact that when His side was pierced, both blood and water flowed out. In this there was a kind of literal fulfillment of Psalm 22:14: 'I am poured out like water — my heart is like wax; it is melted within me.'

Even under all these sufferings the Jews continued to mock Him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Even the chief priests, scribes, and elders joined in, saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself.' The devil was also likely tormenting Him to

the fullest extent of his power at that moment — which is why Jesus said, as Luke 22:53 records, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.'

Under these sufferings, after crying out repeatedly with a loud voice, Christ finally said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), 'and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.' And so was finished the greatest and most wonderful thing ever done. The angels witnessed the most extraordinary sight they had ever seen. Everything that had been pointed toward by the various institutions of the ceremonial law, by all the typical dispensations, and by all the sacrifices from the beginning of the world — was now accomplished.

Christ came under the power of death and remained in that state until the morning of the third day — and then was finished that great work, the purchase of our redemption, for which such vast preparation had been made from the beginning of the world. Everything required to satisfy the threatenings of the law was now complete. Everything necessary to satisfy divine justice was now done. The full demand of retributive justice had been met — the entire debt was paid. The entire purchase of eternal life was finished. Nothing more has ever needed to be done to purchase salvation for sinners. Nothing has been done since, and nothing more ever will be done.

IMPROVEMENT



In surveying the history of redemption from the fall of man to the end of the world, we have now traced how this work unfolded across the first two of the three main periods into which this entire span of time is divided — from the fall to the incarnation of Christ, and from there to the end of His humiliation. We have examined in particular how God prepared the way for Christ's appearing and purchasing redemption during the first period, and how that purchase was made and completed during the second. I now want to draw some practical applications from what has been said about both of these subjects taken together. I will do this in two ways: first, as a word of reproof; and second, as a word of encouragement.

SECTION 1



I begin with a word of reproof — addressing three things: 1. Unbelief. 2. Self-righteousness. 3. A careless neglect of the salvation Christ offers.

1. Given everything we have heard, how severely does this rebuke those who do not believe in Christ — who refuse to receive Him — that is, everyone who has never truly welcomed Him in their heart. A person may outwardly profess Christ, behave respectably, and wish for some of the benefits He purchased, while their heart has never received Him at all. They may go through the motions without any genuine depth — no true esteem for Christ, no sincere honor or respect for Him. They may never have opened the door of their heart to Christ; they may have kept Him shut out their entire lives, from the very first time they heard of Him and His salvation was offered to them. Their hearts have been open to others — the doors thrown wide, free access granted at any time, embraced and made much of, given the best room, allowed the throne. Yet Christ has always been shut out, and they have been deaf to every knock and every call. They have never found any inclination in their heart to receive Him, and they have never been willing to trust in Him.

Let me now call on those of you in this condition to consider how great your sin truly is in rejecting Jesus Christ — in light of everything that has been said. You are dismissing the glorious person for whose coming God made such extraordinary preparation through a long series of remarkable providences from the very beginning of the world — the one whom, after everything was made ready, God sent into the world, bringing about something never known before: the union of the divine nature with human nature in one person. You have been guilty of dismissing that great Savior who, after all that preparation, actually accomplished the purchase of redemption. After spending thirty-three or thirty-four years in poverty, labor, and contempt in purchasing redemption, He finally completed the purchase by laying down His life under extreme suffering — and by dying and remaining for a time under the power of death, He finished the whole work. This is the person you reject and despise. You are dismissing as unimportant all the glory of His person, all the wonderful love of God the Father in sending Him into the world, and all His extraordinary love displayed throughout the whole of this work. That precious stone which God has laid in Zion as a foundation — laid there through such remarkable works as you have heard — is a stone you have set at nothing.

People sometimes wonder why unbelief should be considered such a serious sin. But after hearing all of this, how can anyone wonder? When this Savior is so great, this work so extraordinary, and such remarkable things have been done to bring it about — there is no reason at all to be surprised that the sin of unbelief, of rejecting this Savior, is described in Scripture as a dreadful sin,

deeply offensive to God, and one that brings greater guilt than the sins of the worst people who never heard of these things and never had this Savior offered to them.

2. What has been said also rebukes those who, instead of believing in Christ, trust in themselves for salvation. It is common for people to take it upon themselves to purchase their own salvation — effectively attempting to do the very work Christ came into the world to do. Are there not some here who trust in their prayers, their good behavior, their religious efforts, their personal reform, and their self-denial to commend themselves to God — to make some payment for their past sins and to win God's favor?

Consider three things.

1. Consider how great the work is that you are taking upon yourself. You are attempting to do the work of the great Savior of the world. You trust in your own efforts to appease God for your sins and to win His heart. Yet you are a poor, worthless, corrupt creature — and still you are so arrogant as to take on the very work that the only begotten Son of God came to earth to do, the work He became man to qualify Himself for, the work for which God spent four thousand years directing all His great providential dealings with the world — having this work chiefly in view, to make the way for Christ to come and do it. This is the work you take upon yourself, foolishly imagining yourself adequate for it — as though your prayers and other religious performances are excellent enough for the purpose. Consider what a vain opinion you hold of yourself. How does such arrogance appear in the sight of Christ — for whom it cost so much to purchase salvation, who could not obtain it even at the price of anything less than wading through a sea of blood and passing through the furnace of God's wrath. And how foolish

your arrogance must appear to God, when He sees you imagining yourself sufficient, and your corrupt, worthless performances adequate for accomplishing what His own Son required the labor of ages of world history to prepare the way for.

2. If your own righteousness were actually a valid ground for trust, then everything Christ did to purchase salvation, and everything God did from the fall of man to that point to prepare the way for it, would be pointless. Your self-righteousness charges God with the greatest foolishness — as though He did all of that for nothing, so unnecessarily that you alone, a little worm with your poor, corrupt prayers and your meager religious efforts mixed with all their hypocrisy and filthiness, are sufficient to accomplish for yourself what required Christ's sacrifice. For if you can appease God's anger and commend yourself to God by these means, then you have no need of Christ at all — and He died for nothing. Galatians 2:21: 'If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly.'

If you can accomplish this through your prayers and good works, then Christ could have spared Himself the effort — spared His blood, remained in the bosom of His Father without coming down into this world to be despised, reproached, and persecuted to death. God would not have needed to be so occupied for four thousand years, bringing about so many changes in the state of the world, in order to accomplish something that you — as small as you are — can apparently manage in a few days with nothing more than a handful of sighs, groans, prayers, and religious performances. Consider: what greater charge of foolishness could you lay against God than this — that He did all those things before and af-

ter Christ came into the world so needlessly? When instead of all that, He could simply have called on you and handed the business over to you, which you apparently think you can handle so easily.

How blind are people in their natural condition! How foolish are the thoughts they have about things — and especially how vain are the thoughts they have about themselves! How ignorant they are of their own smallness and corruption! How they lift themselves up to heaven! What great things they presume to claim for themselves!

3. Those who trust in their own righteousness are claiming the honor of the greatest thing God Himself ever did — not merely as if they were capable of performing divine works or accomplishing some great work of God, but in their pride they are not satisfied with anything less than taking on the very greatest work God ever performed: the work of redemption. You can see how God's works of providence are greater than His works of creation, and that all of God's providential works from the beginning of human history were aimed at one thing: making the way for the purchasing of redemption. But this is what you are taking upon yourself. To take on working out your own redemption is a greater thing than if you had taken it upon yourself to create a universe. Imagine what a spectacle you would make — a poor worm trying seriously to create the kind of world God created — swelling with pride, dressing yourself in majesty, presuming to speak a word of power and call a universe into being from nothing, proceeding in order: 'Let there be light; let there be a firmament,' and so on. But then recognize: in attempting to work out your own redemption, you are attempting something even greater than that — and you are serious about

it, cannot be talked out of it, keep striving at it, and are filled with confidence that you are sufficient for it, always full of hope that you will accomplish it.

You are taking on the very greatest and most difficult part of this work — the purchasing of redemption. Christ can accomplish other parts of this work without great cost or difficulty. But this part cost Him His life, along with countless labors and pains, and great disgrace and contempt besides. Yet this is the very part that self-righteous people attempt to accomplish for themselves. If all the angels in heaven had been sufficient for this work, would God have undertaken all the great preparatory work He did before sending His Son into the world? And would He ever have sent His own Son — the Creator and Lord of the angels — into the world to do and suffer what He did?

What self-righteous people claim for themselves is the same work Christ was doing in His agony and bloody sweat, and when He died on the cross — the greatest thing angels ever witnessed. Yet they imagine they can accomplish with their religious efforts the same thing Christ accomplished through those sufferings. Self-righteousness in effect treats Christ's offering Himself in those sufferings as the greatest act of folly ever witnessed by men or angels, rather than as the most glorious display of divine wisdom and grace ever seen. Indeed, self-righteousness renders everything Christ did throughout His entire life — everything He said and suffered — along with His incarnation itself, and not only that but everything God had been doing through the great dispensations of His providence from the beginning of the world up to that time — as nothing but a display of wild, extreme, and boundless foolishness.

Is it any wonder, then, that the self-righteous spirit is so consistently portrayed in Scripture as the most deadly thing for a person's soul? Is it any wonder that Christ is shown in Scripture to be so provoked by the Pharisees and others who trusted in their own righteousness, were proud of their goodness, and thought their own performances were a worthy price for God's favor and love?

Let this be a warning against a self-righteous spirit. If you are seeking your salvation and making efforts in religion, be careful that you do not trust in what you do. Guard against thoughts like these: that God, seeing how much you have reformed, how hard you are trying in religion, how moved you sometimes are — will be appeased about your sins on that account, or will not be as angry about your past sins because of it. Do not think that you can gain ground with God through such things, or draw Him to show you mercy — or that at least God ought to accept what you do as sufficient reason to forgive you and be merciful. If you think God is obligated to respond to your efforts, and that He is unjust if He disregards your prayers and pains — if you quarrel with God and complain that He is not doing what He should — this reveals what you truly think of your own righteousness: that it is a worthy price of salvation and ought to be accepted by God as such. Complaining about God and quarreling with Him for not taking more notice of your righteousness makes plain that you are guilty of all the arrogance described above — imagining yourself capable of paying the price of your own salvation.

3. What has been said also rebukes those who carelessly neglect the salvation of Christ — those who live in a kind of spiritual numbness, neglecting the work of religion and the state of their

own souls. They take no steps to gain an interest in Christ, or in what He has done and suffered, or any share in the glorious salvation He purchased at such great cost. Instead their minds are occupied with worldly gain or the pleasures and diversions of youth, and they treat lightly whatever they hear from time to time about Christ's salvation, not even troubling themselves to seek it. Let me press you on this with some pointed questions.

1. So many prophets, kings, and godly people had their minds deeply occupied with the prospect of a salvation to be purchased long after their deaths — and will you neglect it now that it has actually been accomplished? You have heard how much the church throughout every age valued the coming redemption of Christ — how joyfully they anticipated it, how earnestly they spoke of it, how they studied and searched into these things, how they sang joyful songs with hearts deeply engaged — and all this without ever expecting to see it happen, knowing it would not come until ages after their deaths, as 1 Peter 1:11-12 indicates. How much did Isaiah, Daniel, and the other prophets speak about this redemption! How deeply engaged were their hearts, how fixed their attention and study on it! How much was David's mind taken up with this subject! He declared it was all his salvation and all his desire — 2 Samuel 23:5. How he poured out his voice and his harp in celebrating it and the wonderful display of divine grace it would bring! And all this while it had not yet happened — they could only see it as something to be fulfilled long after their own day. How Abraham and the other patriarchs rejoiced in the prospect of Christ's day and the redemption He would purchase! Even the

saints before Christ's coming were moved and lifted up in anticipation of this glorious event, though it was then far in the future and had been revealed to them only dimly and obscurely.

Now these very things are declared to you as already fulfilled. Everything the church joyfully prophesied about has now come to pass, and you have been thoroughly shown how it was accomplished. Matthew 13:17: 'Truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.' And yet, with all these things so fully set before you as already accomplished — how lightly you treat them! How little do you take notice of them! How indifferent you are, busy with other things and not even feeling any concern about them! Your sin is greatly magnified in the sight of God. God has given you a far greater advantage for your eternal salvation than those saints of old ever enjoyed. He has placed you under a more glorious dispensation, given you a clearer revelation of Christ and His salvation — and yet you neglect all these advantages and go on carelessly, as though nothing had been done, as though no such offer had ever been made to you.

2. The angels have been so deeply engaged about this salvation through Christ since the fall of man — even though it is not for them — and will you, who need it and have it offered to you, remain so careless about it? You have heard how the angels were placed under Christ as Mediator from the beginning, and how they have served throughout as ministering spirits in this great work. In all the remarkable providential events you have heard about since the beginning of the world, they have been active and engaged as a flame of fire — serving as ministering spirits to carry out this great work of redemption. When Christ came, how absorbed were their

minds in it! They came to Zechariah to announce the coming of Christ's forerunner. They came to the Virgin Mary to announce the approaching birth of Christ, the newborn Savior, and to point out the means of safety for Him. How engaged were they at the time of Christ's birth! The entire multitude of the heavenly host sang praises on that occasion, saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Afterward they ministered to Christ on earth again and again — at His temptation, at His agony in the garden, at His resurrection, and at His ascension. All of this shows how deeply engaged they were in this work. Scripture tells us that they long to look into these things, as 1 Peter 1:12 says: 'Things into which angels long to look.' In Revelation they are shown in heaven continually singing praises to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. Now — shall these take such notice of this redemption and its purchaser, when they need it not for themselves and have no direct share or offer in it — while you, to whom it is freely offered and who are in desperate need of it, neglect and ignore it?

3. Was the purchasing of this salvation worth such labor and suffering on Christ's part — and is it not worth some effort on your part to seek it? Was it something of such great importance that sinners should be saved — important enough to weigh so heavily on Christ's heart that it led Him to become a man, to endure contempt and labor and death itself to secure it, even though He had no personal need, could gain no addition to His eternal happiness, could get nothing from those He saved, and had no need of them at all? Was it so important that sinners should be saved that He could rightly be moved to stoop to such humiliation and suffering — and yet is it not worth your while to earnestly seek your share in

it? You are one of those very sinners who needs this salvation, and you will perish forever without it. It has already been procured. Everything is ready.

4. Shall the great God be so concerned about this salvation that He repeatedly overturned the world to make way for it — and when all is done, is it not worth your seeking after? How the Lord of heaven and earth has been engaged in this work! What great and wonderful things He has done from one age to the next — removing kings and setting up kings, raising up a great number of prophets, separating a distinct nation from the rest of the world, overthrowing one nation and kingdom after another, and repeatedly overturning the state of the world. For forty centuries in succession He continued bringing about one change and revolution after another, all to prepare the way for the securing of salvation. And after all that — after the great Savior finally comes at the end of those ages, becomes incarnate, passes through a long series of contempt and suffering, and then endures all the waves and billows of God's wrath for human sin until His soul was overwhelmed — after all this has been done to provide salvation for sinners, is it not worthy of your attention or concern? Are you so indifferent that it can be tossed aside and treated as nothing compared to worldly profit, fine clothing, youthful entertainment, and other such trivial things — even though you are exactly the person who needs this salvation?

How I wish that those who live in neglect of this salvation would consider what they are doing! Everything you have heard on this subject makes plain the force of the apostle's cry in Hebrews 2:3: 'How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?' And in Acts 13:41: 'Take heed, you scoffers, and marvel and perish; for I

am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.' God regards people like you as great enemies of the cross of Christ — opponents and despisers of all the glory of this great work. If God has placed such value on the glory of salvation that He destroyed many nations and overturned the whole world to prepare the way for the glory of His Son — how little account will He make of the lives and souls of ten thousand impenitent despisers like you, when He comes and finds that your welfare stands in the way of that glory? You will be shattered like a clay pot and trampled like mud in the street. God may, through remarkable patience, endure hardened and careless sinners for a time — but He will not long tolerate such despisers of His dear Son and His great salvation, whose glory He has cared about so deeply, before He utterly destroys them without remedy or mercy.

SECTION 2



I will close with a second application — a word of encouragement to burdened souls to place their trust in Christ for salvation. To all who are not careless or indifferent, but who have made seeking an interest in Christ their chief concern — those who feel in some measure their need of Him, and who are afraid of the wrath to come — what has been said holds out great encouragement to come and commit their souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me point you to two things in particular that should move you to do so.

1. The purchase that has been made is complete. As you have heard, the work of purchasing salvation was entirely finished during the time of Christ's humiliation. When Christ rose from the dead and was exalted from the lowly state He had taken on for our salvation, the purchase of eternal life was wholly made — nothing more needed to be done. Now the servants have been sent out with the message we read about in Matthew 22:4: 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.' Since all things are ready — are your sins many and great? Here is more than enough accomplished by Christ to secure their pardon. You do not need any righteousness of your own to obtain pardon

and justification. You may come freely, without money and without price. Since such a free and gracious invitation has been given to you, come — come just as you are, with nothing to offer; come as a poor condemned criminal; come and throw yourself at Christ's feet, as one who has been justly condemned and is utterly helpless. A complete salvation has been worked out by Christ and is offered to you through Him. Come — accept it, and be saved.

2. For Christ to reject someone who comes to Him like this would be to undo all the great things you have heard God accomplished from the fall of man to the incarnation of Christ. It would also undo everything Christ did and suffered while on earth — indeed, it would undo the incarnation itself and all the great things done in preparation for it. All of those things had one purpose: that those who come to Christ might be saved. You can therefore be certain that Christ will not be reluctant to save those who come to Him and trust in Him. He has no desire to frustrate His own work — it cost Him too much for that. Nor will God the Father turn you away, for He has no desire to frustrate the work He was engaged in for hundreds and thousands of years to prepare the way for the salvation of sinners through Christ. Come, then — listen to the tender and earnest calls of Christ to your soul. Do what He invites and commands in Matthew 11:28-30: 'Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'

PERIOD 3



In this study we have already traced how the work of redemption was carried on through the first two of the three periods into which we divided the whole span of time from the fall to the end of the world. We now come to

the third and final period — beginning with Christ's resurrection and extending to the end of the world. We will now show how this work was carried on through this period, beginning from this

proposition: The entire span of time from the end of Christ's humiliation to the end of the world is occupied with bringing about the great effect and success of Christ's purchase.

This is not to say that there were no effects or fruits of Christ's redemption before this period — there were, from the very beginning of human history. But all the success of Christ's redemption before His coming was only preparatory and anticipatory, like a few fruits gathered before the main harvest. No more success came before Christ's coming than God saw as necessary to prepare the way for His arrival. The proper time for the success and effect of Christ's purchase is after the purchase has been made — just as the proper time for the world to enjoy the light of the sun is daytime, after the sun has risen, though a faint reflected light may come

from the moon and planets beforehand. Even the fruits of Christ's redemption during His own time on earth were very small compared to what came after His humiliation ended.

But now Christ has finished the greatest and most difficult of all works — the work of purchasing redemption. The time has come to obtain its purpose and its glorious fruit. This is the next work He takes up. Having completed the entire course of His sufferings and humiliation, all of that is now behind Him. He will never suffer again. Now is the time for Him to receive the joy that was set before Him. Having made His soul an offering for sin, now is the time for Him to see His offspring, to be given a portion among the great, and to divide the spoil with the strong.

One purpose of Christ's humiliation was to lay the foundation for the overthrow of Satan's kingdom — and now the time has come to carry it out. As Christ said shortly before His crucifixion, in John 12:31: 'Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.' Another purpose was to gather all things together in Christ. Now the time for that has also come. John 12:32: 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself' — consistent with Jacob's prophecy that when Shiloh should come, to Him the obedience of the peoples would belong, as Genesis 49:10 says. Another purpose was the salvation of the elect. Now, with His sufferings finished and His humiliation complete, the time for that has also come. Hebrews 5:8-9: 'Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.' Another purpose was to accomplish great glory for the persons of the Trinity through these events. The time for that has now come as

well. John 17:1: 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.' Another purpose was the glory of the saints. The time for that is now here too. John 17:2: 'Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.' And all of God's providential dealings from this point forward — to the final consummation of all things — are directed toward giving Christ His reward, fulfilling the purpose of what He did and suffered on earth, and bringing to completion the joy that was set before Him.

INTRODUCTION



Before turning to the specific things accomplished in this period, I want to briefly note some general observations about it — and in particular, how Scripture describes this period of time.

1. The times of this period are, for the most part, what the Old Testament calls 'the latter days.' We frequently read in the Old Testament prophets of things that would come to pass 'in the latter days' — and sometimes 'in the last days.' These expressions most commonly refer to the period we are now considering. It is called 'the latter days' and 'the last days' because this is the final period of God's providential dealings on earth — the last period of that great work of providence, the work of redemption. It is, in a sense, the sum of all God's works of providence, the time in which the church is under the final dispensation of the covenant of grace it will ever experience on earth.

2. The whole span of this period is sometimes called 'the end of the world' in Scripture, as in 1 Corinthians 10:11: 'Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.' And in Hebrews 9:26, the apostle uses the phrase 'the end of the ages' to

mean the entire Gospel era, from Christ's birth to the close of the day of judgment: 'But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' This span of time may rightly be called 'the end of the world,' because the entire time is occupied with bringing things to their great conclusion — the great issue that God had been preparing for through all His providential dealings from the fall of man to this point. Before this, everything was in a preparatory state. Now things are in a finishing state. This whole time is the winding-up of history. The former earthly order of things is coming to an end by degrees, gradually fading away, while a spiritual order begins to be established and grows increasingly firm. First, the former state of the church — which may be called its worldly state, the state of outward ordinances and the elementary principles of the world — comes to an end. Then the Jewish state comes to an end in the destruction of their city and nation. Then the old pagan empire comes to an end in the time of Constantine — another further step in the winding-up of the world. The next step is the ending of Satan's visible kingdom in the world, with the fall of Antichrist and the calling of the Jews. And last will come the destruction of the physical framework of the world itself, at the close of the day of judgment. The world is all this time, as it were, in the process of ending — though it comes to its end through several steps and stages. Heaven and earth began to shake, in preparation for dissolution — according to the prophecy of Haggai before Christ came — so that only the things that cannot be shaken may remain: that is, so that what is temporary may pass away, and only what is eternal may endure.

First, the outward ordinances of Jewish worship came to an end, making way for the spiritual worship of the heart that will endure forever. John 4:21: Jesus said to the woman, 'Believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.' And verse 23: 'But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.' This is one instance of the temporary order ending and the eternal order beginning. After that, the outward temple and the outward city of Jerusalem came to an end, giving way to the spiritual temple and the spiritual city, which are to last forever. This is another instance of removing what is ready to vanish, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. After that, the old pagan empire came to an end, making way for the kingdom of Christ, which will last to all eternity. This is another step in the ending of the temporal world and the beginning of the age to come — which is an eternal world. After that, with the fall of Antichrist, Satan's visible kingdom on earth comes to an end, establishing Christ's kingdom, which is an eternal kingdom. As the prophet Daniel says in Daniel 7:27: 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' This is another instance of the temporary world ending and the eternal one beginning. Finally, the very framework of this corruptible world will come to an end, making way for the church to dwell in another home that will last forever. This is the last instance of the same pattern.

Because the world is thus coming to an end through various steps and stages, the apostle perhaps uses the plural form, writing that the 'ends' of the ages have come upon us — not 'the end' but 'the ends,' in the plural, as though the world reaches its end through several successive closings.

The Gospel dispensation is the final state of things in the world — and it is a finishing state. All of it is spent in completing what had previously been in preparation, and in abolishing what had previously stood. It is all spent, as it were, in summing everything up, bringing things to their conclusions and proper fulfillment. In this period all the old types are fulfilled, and every prophecy of every prophet from the beginning of the world will be accomplished.

3. The state of things attained through the events of this period is called 'a new heaven and a new earth.' Isaiah 65:17-18: 'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness.' And Isaiah 66:22: 'For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, so your offspring and your name will endure.' See also Isaiah 51:16. Just as the former order of things — the old world — is coming to an end step by step throughout this period, so the new order of things — the new world, which is a spiritual world — is beginning to take shape and be established.

The corruptible heaven and earth are shaking, so that the new heaven and new earth — which cannot be shaken — may be established and remain.

With each successive ending of the old order, there comes a new beginning of a new and eternal order. This was true at the destruction of Jerusalem, which marked the establishing of the spiritual Jerusalem in place of the literal one. The same is true with the destruction of the old pagan empire, and with each subsequent ending of the old order — until at last even the physical framework of the old world itself will come to an end. Then the church will dwell in a world new to it — or new to much of it — namely heaven, which will be a new dwelling place. At that point the fullest meaning of 'the new heavens and the new earth' will be accomplished. See Revelation 21:1.

The purpose for which God created the world was to prepare a kingdom for His Son — for He is appointed heir of all things — so that Christ might possess it and reign in it forever. To the degree that Christ's kingdom is established in the world, the world is brought to its end and the eternal order is set up. To that same degree, all the great changes and revolutions of the ages are brought to their everlasting conclusion, and all things reach their ultimate destination. The waters of that long river of divine providence — with its many branches and its many bends and turns — are being emptied out into the ocean they have been seeking from the very beginning, and so come to their rest. As Christ's kingdom is established in the world, things are settled into their eternal state, and the flow of events in this changeable world is brought to a close. The first heaven and the first earth pass away, and the new heaven and new earth — the everlasting heaven and earth — are established in their place. This brings me to observe:

4. The state of things attained through the events of this period is what Scripture so often calls 'the kingdom of heaven' or 'the kingdom of God.' We read of the kingdom of heaven very frequently in the New Testament. John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was near, and so did Christ and His disciples after Him — referring to something the Jews of that day eagerly expected and widely discussed, which they called by that name. They appear to have drawn their expectation and the name chiefly from Daniel's prophecy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel 2:44: 'In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom' — together with Daniel 7:13-14.

This kingdom of heaven is the Gospel state of things in Christ's church and in the world — the state in which the success of Christ's redemption is realized during this period. Great kingdoms had been established before — earthly kingdoms, such as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. But Christ came to establish the final kingdom, which is not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one — the kingdom of heaven. John 18:36: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' This is the kingdom Christ speaks of in Luke 22:29: 'My Father has granted Me a kingdom.' This kingdom began shortly after Christ's resurrection and has been accomplished through various stages from that time to the end of the world. Sometimes 'the kingdom of heaven' refers to the spiritual state of the church that began shortly after Christ's resurrection; sometimes to the more perfect state of the church that will come after the fall of Antichrist; and sometimes to the glorious and blessed state the church will enter at the day of judgment. As the

apostle says in 1 Corinthians 15:50, speaking of the resurrection: 'I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'

Under this heading I want to note several things in particular, for a clearer understanding of what Scripture says about this period.

1. The establishment of Christ's kingdom is accomplished chiefly through four great successive events, each of which Scripture calls 'Christ's coming in His kingdom.' The whole success of Christ's redemption is summed up in one phrase: the establishment of His kingdom. This is accomplished chiefly through four great successive acts of God's providence — and every one of them is described in Scripture as Christ's coming in His kingdom. The first is Christ's appearing in the remarkable providential events of the apostles' day, establishing His kingdom and destroying its enemies — events that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is called Christ's coming in His kingdom in Matthew 16:28: 'Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.' It is also described this way in Matthew 24. The second is what was accomplished in Constantine's time in the destruction of the pagan Roman empire. This is portrayed as Christ's coming, and compared to His coming to judgment, in Revelation 6 toward the end of that chapter. The third is what will be accomplished at the destruction of Antichrist. This also is described as Christ's coming in His kingdom in Daniel 7 and in other places, as I may show later when I come to speak of it. The fourth and last is His coming to the final judgment, which is the event most prominently meant in Scripture by 'Christ's coming in His kingdom.'

2. Each of the first three of these four events is a vivid picture or type of the fourth and last — Christ's coming to the final judgment — just as the great providential events before Christ's first coming were types of that coming. Just as Christ's final coming to judgment will be accompanied by a resurrection of the dead, each of the three earlier comings is accompanied by a spiritual resurrection. The coming of Christ that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem was preceded by a glorious spiritual resurrection of souls — the calling of the Gentiles and the bringing of vast multitudes to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. Christ's coming in Constantine's time was accompanied by a glorious spiritual resurrection of the greater part of the known world — its conversion from paganism to a visible-church state. Christ's coming at the destruction of Antichrist will be attended by a spiritual resurrection of the church after it had long been, as it were, dead during the times of Antichrist. This is what Revelation 20 calls 'the first resurrection.'

Again, just as Christ at the final judgment will gloriously reveal Himself coming in the glory of His Father, so in each of the three earlier events Christ gloriously revealed Himself — sending judgments on His enemies and showing grace and favor to His church. And just as the last coming of Christ will be attended by a literal gathering of the elect from the four corners of heaven, so each of the preceding events was attended by a spiritual ingathering of the elect. Just as this final gathering will be accomplished by God's angels with the great sound of a trumpet, as Matthew 24:31 says, so each of the earlier spiritual ingatherings was accomplished by the trumpet of the Gospel, sounded by the ministers of Christ. Just as a time of great spiritual decline and wickedness will precede

Christ's final appearance, so this has been — or will be — the pattern with each of the other appearances. Before each of them comes a time of great opposition against the church: before the first, by the Jews in their persecutions recorded in the New Testament; before the second in Constantine's time, by the pagans in a series of persecutions raised by the Roman emperors against Christians; before the third, by Antichrist; before the last, by Gog and Magog as described in Revelation.

Through each of these comings of Christ, God works a glorious deliverance for His church. Each is accompanied by a glorious advancement in the church's condition. The first, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, brought the church into the Gospel — a glorious state of the church that the prophets had long foretold — elevating the church into far more glorious circumstances than it had known under the Jewish dispensation. The second, in Constantine's time, advanced the church into a state of freedom from persecution, the support of civil authority, and triumph over its pagan persecutors. The third, at the fall of Antichrist, will advance the church into that state of glorious prevalence of truth, liberty, peace, and joy that we read about so frequently in the prophetic portions of Scripture. The last will bring the church to consummate glory in both soul and body in heaven.

Each of these comings of Christ is also accompanied by a terrible destruction of the wicked and the enemies of the church: the first with the destruction of the persecuting Jews, which was devastating; the second with dreadful judgments on the pagan persecutors of the church, of which more later; the third with the awful

destruction of Antichrist, the cruelest and most bitter enemy the church has ever faced; and the fourth with divine wrath and vengeance on all the ungodly.

Furthermore, in each of these comings of Christ there is an ending of the old heavens and the old earth, and a beginning of new heavens and a new earth — an end of a temporary order of things, and a beginning of an eternal one.

3. Each of these four great acts of God's providence that are described as Christ's coming in His kingdom are simply steps and degrees in the fulfillment of one single event. They are not the establishing of several distinct kingdoms of Christ. They are all successive degrees of fulfillment of the one event prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14: 'I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.' This is what the Jews expected and called 'the coming of the kingdom of heaven' — what John the Baptist and Christ meant when they said, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' This great event is accomplished gradually, through several steps. The four great events described above are successive steps toward the fulfillment of this grand event.

When Christ came through the preaching of the apostles to establish His kingdom in the world — the dispensation that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem — it was accomplished in a glorious degree. When the pagan empire was destroyed in Constantine's time, it was fulfilled in a further degree. When

Antichrist is destroyed, it will be accomplished in a still higher degree. But when the end of the world arrives, it will be accomplished in its most perfect and complete degree of all. Because these four great events are images of one another, the first three being types of the last, and because they are all only successive steps in the fulfillment of the same thing — we find them all prophesied together from time to time as though they were one, as in the prophecies of Daniel and in Matthew 24, where some details apply more naturally to one of them and others to another.

4. As there are several steps in the accomplishment of Christ's kingdom, each step brings a greater degree of fulfillment than the one before it. The fulfillment in Constantine's time was greater and more advanced than the one that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. The fulfillment at the fall of Antichrist will be greater still than what occurred in Constantine's time. And so on with each successive step — so that Christ's kingdom is gradually prevailing and growing through these great stages, from the time of Christ's resurrection to the end of the world.

5. Finally, it may be noted that God's great providential workings between these four great events are aimed at preparing the way for Christ's kingdom and glory in the great event that follows each one. The providential dealings of God with His church and the world before the destruction of the pagan empire in Constantine's time all appear designed to prepare the way for Christ's glory and the church's blessing in that event. The great providential workings that follow Constantine's time, up until the destruction of Antichrist and the beginning of the glorious era of the church that follows, all appear designed to prepare the way for the greater glory of Christ and His church in that event. And the

providential workings after that, leading to the end of the world, appear designed for the greater manifestation of Christ's glory at the end of all things and in the consummation of everything.

I felt it necessary to lay out these general observations about this final period of God's providence before turning to the particular providential events through which the work of redemption is carried forward in this period. But before doing that, I will also briefly address one question: Why should the establishment of Christ's kingdom after His humiliation be so gradual — accomplished through so many steps over such a long span of time — when God could easily have completed it all at once?

It would be presumptuous to claim to explain all of God's purposes in this. Yet much of the wisdom of God can be seen in it, particularly in these two things.

1. Through this gradual process, the glory of God's wisdom in how He works is more visible to created beings. If it had been accomplished all at once — in an instant or in a very short time — creatures would have had no opportunity to observe and reflect on the individual steps of divine wisdom. But when the work is accomplished gradually, and one evidence of His wisdom follows another, the whole can be perceived and appreciated. God has wisely chosen to accomplish His great design through a wonderful and extended series of events, so that the glory of His wisdom is displayed across the whole series, and the glory of His perfections can be seen emerging part by part, through successive revelations. If all the glory that appears across all these events had been revealed at once, it would have been too much for us — more than we could take in at one time. It would have dazzled and overwhelmed us.

2. In this way, Satan is more gloriously defeated. God could easily have crushed Satan in a single act of almighty power. But by giving him time to use every ounce of his cunning to hinder the fruits of what Christ did and suffered, Satan is not simply caught off guard — he is given ample opportunity to press his full power and scheming again and again, strengthening his position through the work of many ages. Yet God defeats and confounds him, and establishes Christ's kingdom time after time in spite of all his clever schemes and great efforts — advancing it higher and higher with every step, until at last it is fully established and Satan is completely and eternally vanquished at the end of all things.

I now turn to the particular events by which, from the end of Christ's humiliation to the end of the world, the success of Christ's purchase has been or will be accomplished.

1. I will note the things by which Christ was placed in immediate readiness to accomplish the purpose of His purchase.
2. I will show how He obtained and accomplished that success.

PART 1



I turn first to the things by which Christ was placed in readiness to accomplish the purpose of His purchase. These are two: His resurrection and His ascension. Just as the incarnation of Christ was necessary for Him to be in close proximity to the purchase of redemption, so the resurrection and ascension of Christ were necessary for Him to accomplish the fruit of that purchase.

1. His resurrection. It was necessary for Christ to rise from the dead in order to obtain the end and effect of His purchase of redemption. God the Father had committed the entire work of redemption to His Son — not only the purchasing of it, but the actual bestowing of the blessings purchased. Christ was to purchase redemption as priest, but also to bring it about as king, and to do so as the God-man. The Father would deal with fallen humanity in mercy only through a mediator. But for Christ to carry on the work of redemption and accomplish the fruit of His own purpose as the God-man, He had to be alive — and therefore He had to rise from the dead. So after finishing the purchase through death and remaining for a time under the power of death, Christ rose from the dead to fulfill the purpose of His purchase — to bring about Himself the very thing for which He died. God the Father had committed this to Him, that as Lord of all He might govern all things

according to His own purposes. Romans 14:9: 'For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.'

Christ's resurrection — and likewise His ascension — was itself part of the fruit of what Christ did and suffered in His humiliation. Though Christ did not purchase redemption for Himself, He did purchase eternal life and glory for Himself through what He did and suffered — and this eternal life and glory was given to Him as the reward of His obedience. Philippians 2:8-9: 'He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him.' This may be regarded as part of the success of Christ's purchase: Christ did not rise as a private individual, but as the head of the elect church — so that in a sense they all rose with Him. Christ was justified in His resurrection — that is, God acquitted and discharged Him, declaring thereby that He had done and suffered enough for the sins of all the elect. Romans 4:25: 'He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.' God placed Him in possession of eternal life as the head of the church — a sure pledge that the rest of the church would follow. When Christ rose from the dead, that was the beginning of eternal life in Him. His life before His death was mortal and temporary; His life after His resurrection was eternal. Romans 6:9: 'Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.' And Revelation 1:18: 'I am the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.' But He entered possession of this eternal life as the head of the body — taking possession of it not only for Himself but to bestow on all who believe in Him. So the whole church, in a sense,

rises in Him. He who had lately suffered so much now enters into eternal glory and will never suffer again. God the Father neither expects nor desires any further suffering from Him.

Christ's resurrection is the most joyful event that ever occurred — because through it Christ rested from the great and difficult work of purchasing redemption, and received God's declaration that it was finished. The death of Christ was the greatest and most remarkable event ever to take place — but it has in it much that is sorrowful. By the resurrection of Christ, that sorrow is turned to joy. The head of the whole church, in that great event, enters into possession of eternal life, and the whole church is, as it were, 'born again to a living hope' (1 Peter 1:3). Weeping lasted through the night, but now joy comes in the morning — the most joyful morning that ever was. This is the day of the reign of the head of the church, and all the church reigns with Him. It is spoken of as a day worthy of the greatest celebration. Psalm 118:24: 'This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.' Therefore this day above all others is appointed as the day of the church's spiritual joy until the end of the world — set apart weekly as the day of holy rest and rejoicing, that the church may rest and rejoice together with her head. Just as Genesis 3 is the most sorrowful chapter in the Bible, the Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Christ may be regarded as the most joyful chapters in all of Scripture — for they describe the completion of the purchase of redemption and the beginning of the glory of the head of the church, as the greatest pledge and guarantee of the eternal glory of all the rest.

It should further be noted that the Gospel day most properly begins with the resurrection of Christ. Until Christ rose from the dead, the Old Testament dispensation remained in force. But now it came to an end — everything foreshadowed in the typical ordinances of that dispensation having been fulfilled. Here, most properly, is the end of the Old Testament night. Christ rising from the grave in joy and glory was like the joyful bridegroom of the church, like a glorious conqueror going out to subdue their enemies — like the sun rising from beneath the earth after a long night of darkness, coming forth as a bridegroom, strong and eager, filling the world with joyful light. Now that joyful and excellent dispensation begins — the glorious dispensation the prophets had so much to say about. Now the Gospel sun has risen in glory, 'with healing in its wings,' so that those who fear God's name may go out and grow up like well-fed calves in the stall.

2. Christ's ascension into heaven. I include in this His sitting at the right hand of God — for the ascension and the session at God's right hand can hardly be treated as two separate things. Christ's ascension was simply His ascending to God's right hand; it was His coming to sit down at His Father's right hand in glory. This was another thing by which Christ was placed in readiness to accomplish the fruit of His purchase — just as a king who comes to deliver his people must first be installed on his throne in order to act from a position of full authority. We are told that Christ was exalted for the very purpose of bringing about the success of His redemption. Acts 5:31: 'God exalted Him to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

Christ's ascension into heaven was, in effect, His solemn enthronement — the moment when the Father placed Him on the throne and invested Him with the glory of the kingdom He had purchased, so that He might obtain the success of His redemption in conquering all His enemies. Psalm 110:1: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.' Christ entered heaven to obtain the fruit of His purchase just as the high priest of old, after offering sacrifice, entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of the offering in order to obtain the effect of the sacrifice he had offered. See Hebrews 9:12. He entered heaven there to make intercession for His people — to present the sacrifice He had made and plead for its success. Hebrews 7:25.

As He ascended into heaven, God the Father visibly enthroned Him as king of the universe. He then placed all the angels under Christ's authority and subjected heaven and earth beneath Him, so that He might govern all things for the good of the people for whom He had died. Ephesians 1:20-22.

Just as Christ rose from the dead as the head and forerunner of the whole church, so He ascended into heaven in the same capacity — and the church, in a sense, ascends with Him just as it rose with Him. As Ephesians 2:6 says, God 'raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

The day of Christ's ascension into heaven was, without question, a joyful and glorious day in heaven. As heaven received Christ — the God-man — as its king, it received a great increase of glory and joy far beyond anything it had known before. So the times for both parts of the church — the part in heaven and the part on earth — became more glorious after Christ's humiliation than they had been before.

That covers the things by which Christ was placed in full readiness to obtain the success of redemption.

PART 2



I now turn to show how Christ accomplished this success. This success consists in two things: grace and glory. The success that consists in grace is seen in the works of God carried out during the ages of the church while the church continues under the outward means of grace. The success that consists in glory reaches its chief fulfillment at the day of judgment.

SECTION 1



I will first consider the success that consists in God's grace — which appears mainly in the work of God during the time the Christian church continues under the means of grace. This spans from Christ's resurrection to His appearing in the clouds of heaven to judge — and includes the first three of the great providential events previously described, which are called 'Christ's coming in His kingdom.' In speaking of this success, I will:

1. Note the things by which the means of this success were established after Christ's resurrection; and

2. Consider the success itself.

Section 1. I will consider the providential acts by which the means of this success were established after Christ's resurrection.

1. The abolishing of the Jewish dispensation. This was done gradually, but it began from the time of Christ's resurrection, in which its abolition is grounded. This was the first step taken toward bringing the former state of the world to an end. It is also to be seen as a great means of the success of Christ's redemption. The Jewish dispensation was designed for only one nation. It was not suited to a church spread across the whole world, nor would it have been practically workable for people living in all parts of the

world — it would have been impossible for them to travel to Jerusalem three times a year as that system required. When God therefore purposed to enlarge His church after Christ's resurrection, it was necessary for this dispensation to be abolished. Had it continued, it would have been a major obstacle to the expansion of the church. Furthermore, the ceremonial law — with its burdens and its peculiar rites — had served as a dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, fostering hostility and keeping the Gentiles from embracing the true religion. This wall was therefore torn down to make way for the wider spread of the Gospel. Ephesians 2:14-15.

2. The next thing in order of time appears to be the appointment of the Christian Sabbath. Although this was established gradually in the Christian church, the revelation of God's will in this regard began on the day of Christ's resurrection, when He appeared to His disciples — John 20:19. It was confirmed by His repeated appearances on that particular day rather than any other, as John 20:26 shows, and by His pouring out the Holy Spirit so remarkably on that day, as Acts 2:1 records. Further direction came in the pattern of public worship being held on that day, which can be inferred from Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, and Revelation 1:10. So the day of the week on which Christ rose from the dead — that joyful day — is appointed as the church's holy Sabbath to the end of the world, and the day of its regular public worship. This has been a very great and central means of the Gospel's success in the world.

3. The next thing was Christ's appointment of the Gospel ministry, and His commissioning and sending forth of His apostles to teach and baptize all nations. We read of this in Matthew 28:19-20: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Three things were accomplished by this one instruction and commission of Christ to His apostles.

1. The appointment of the office of Gospel ministry. The commission Christ gave to His apostles, in its most essential elements, belongs to all ministers. By virtue of it, the apostles were ministers and elders of the church.

2. There is also something distinctive in the apostles' commission — namely, to go from one nation to another, preaching the Gospel throughout the whole world. The apostles possessed something above ordinary ministerial authority: an extraordinary power to teach and govern that extended to all the churches — not only those existing at the time, but all that would come into existence to the end of the world through their ministry. In this way the apostles were, in subordination to Christ, made foundations of the Christian church. See Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 21:14.

3. Here is also the appointment of Christian baptism. This ordinance had existed before — both John the Baptist and Christ had baptized. But now it was formally established by this institution as an ordinance to be maintained in the Christian church to the end of the world. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper had been established earlier, just before Christ's crucifixion.

4. The next thing to note is the endowing of the apostles and others with extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit — such as the gift of tongues, healing, prophecy, and others. The Spirit of God was poured out in great abundance in this regard.

Not only ministers but a very large portion of Christians throughout the world received these gifts — young and old alike. Not only leaders and people of higher standing, but ordinary people, servants and slave women, commonly received them, in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Joel 2:28-29. The apostle Peter notes that this prophecy was being fulfilled in this very dispensation, as Acts 2:17 records.

What a remarkable dispensation this was! Under the Old Testament, very few were honored by God in this way. Moses had wished that all the Lord's people were prophets, as Numbers 11:29 records — while Joshua was troubled that even Eldad and Medad were prophesying. Now the wish of Moses was fulfilled. This continued at a very significant level through the end of the apostolic age — the first hundred years after Christ's birth — which is therefore called 'the age of miracles.'

This was a great means of the Gospel's success in that age, and of establishing the Christian church throughout the world. Its impact extended not only to that age but to all ages until the end of the world — because Christianity, having been established across so much of the known world through miracles, was afterward more easily preserved through tradition. Through these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and others were enabled to write the New Testament, which would serve as an infallible rule of faith and practice for the church to the end of the world. Furthermore, these miracles stand recorded in those writings as permanent proof and evidence of the truth of the Christian faith to every generation.

5. The next thing to observe is the full and plain revelation of the glorious doctrines of the Gospel — doctrines that had been only obscurely revealed under the Old Testament. The doctrines of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, His ascension and glory, and the way of salvation were largely hidden under the Old Testament behind types and shadows and obscure revelations — just as Moses put a veil over his face to hide its radiance. But now the veil of the temple has been torn from top to bottom, and Christ — the antitype of Moses — shines without a veil over His face. 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 18. Now these glorious mysteries are plainly revealed — mysteries that had been largely kept hidden since the foundation of the world. Ephesians 3:3-5; Romans 16:25: 'According to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested.' Colossians 1:26: 'The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints.'

So the Sun of righteousness, having risen from beneath the earth, begins to shine clearly — not merely by the faint reflected light it gave before. Christ, before His death, had revealed many things more clearly than they had ever been revealed in the Old Testament. But the great mysteries of Christ's redemption, reconciliation through His death, and justification through His righteousness were not fully revealed before His resurrection. Christ gave the reason for this — that new wine should not be put into old wineskins — and the full revelation came gradually after His resurrection. In all probability, Christ instructed the disciples far more clearly during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, when, as Acts 1:3 records, He appeared to them and spoke about the things concerning the kingdom of God. Luke 24:45 tells

us He 'opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.' But the clearest revelation came chiefly after the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Christ's promise in John 16:12-13: 'I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.' Most of the mysteries of the Gospel that we possess came to us through the apostle Paul, through whom we understand more of Gospel doctrine than even the greatest Old Testament prophets knew.

The light of the Gospel, which began to dawn and gradually grew through all the ages of the Old Testament — as we observed along the way — has now come to the full light of day, and to the brightness of the sun shining in his unveiled glory.

6. The next thing to note is the appointment of the office of deacon in the Christian church, described in Acts 6 — an office established to care for the material needs of the members of Christ's church and to exercise that great Christian virtue of charity.

7. The calling, equipping, and sending of the apostle Paul. This began with his conversion on the road to Damascus, and it became one of the greatest means of the success of Christ's redemption. More of that success came through the labors, preaching, and writings of this one apostle than through all the other apostles combined. As he himself says in 1 Corinthians 15:10, 'I labored even more than all of them' — and his fruit was correspondingly greater. As the apostle to the Gentiles, it was chiefly through his ministry that the Gentiles were reached and the Gospel spread throughout the world. The nations of Europe, including our own, have the Gospel primarily because of him. He was also more used by the

Holy Spirit in revealing the glorious doctrines of the Gospel through his writings — for the benefit of the church in all ages — than all the other apostles put together.

8. The next thing to note is the establishment of church councils for deciding controversies and ordering the affairs of the church of Christ, described in Acts 15.

9. The last thing I will mention under this heading is the committing of the New Testament to writing. All of it was written after Christ's resurrection, and all of it was written either by the apostles or by companions of the apostles. All of the New Testament was written by the apostles themselves except for what was written by Mark and Luke — that is, the Gospels of Mark and Luke and the book of Acts. The writer of the Gospel of Mark is understood to be the one whose mother was Mary, in whose house believers were gathered praying for Peter when Peter, released from prison by an angel, came and knocked at the door. We read of this in Acts 12:12: 'And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.' He was a companion of the apostles Barnabas and Paul. Acts 15:37: 'Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.' He was the nephew of Barnabas and appears at times to have been a companion of the apostle Paul. Colossians 4:10: 'Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).' The apostles held him in high regard, as these passages show, along with Acts 12:25: 'And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark,' and Acts 13:5: 'When

they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper,' and 2 Timothy 4:11: 'Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.'

Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, was a close companion of the apostle Paul. He is mentioned as being with Paul in the passage just cited, and he refers to himself as accompanying Paul in his travels throughout Acts — using the first person plural when describing Paul's journeys, saying things like, 'We went to such and such a place,' 'We set sail,' and 'We put in at such a place.' He was deeply loved by the apostle Paul — he is the 'beloved physician' spoken of in Colossians 4:14. The apostle counts both Mark and Luke among his fellow workers in Philemon 24: 'Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.'

The remaining books were all written by the apostles themselves. The books of the New Testament fall into three categories: historical, doctrinal, and prophetic. The historical books are the four Gospels, which give us the account of Christ, His purchase of redemption, and His resurrection and ascension — plus the Acts of the Apostles, which records the great events by which the Christian church was first established and spread. The doctrinal books are the epistles, most of which we have from the great apostle Paul. And there is one prophetic book, which reaches beyond the end of all the other biblical history and describes the great events yet to come by which the work of redemption would be carried forward to the end of the world.

All these books are understood to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, except those written by the apostle John, who outlived all the other apostles and wrote after the destruction

of Jerusalem. To this beloved disciple Christ revealed the wonderful things that were to take place in His church to the end of time. He was the one who put the finishing hand to the canon of Scripture and sealed the whole. So the canon of Scripture — that great and permanent written rule that was begun around the time of Moses — is now complete and settled, with a curse pronounced against anyone who adds to it or takes away from it. With this, everything pertaining to the appointed means of grace is established and complete. All the regular means of grace were finalized in the apostolic age — before the death of the apostle John — and are to remain unchanged until the day of judgment.

We have now covered the things by which the means of grace were given and established in the Christian church.

Section 2. The other matter to address regarding the success of Christ's redemption during the church's time under the means of grace is how that success was carried forward — which I will now take up.

It is important to recognize that the Christian church, throughout its time under the means of grace, passes through two very different states.

1. A state of suffering, affliction, and persecution — which is its condition for most of the time from Christ's resurrection until the fall of Antichrist.

2. A state of peace and prosperity — which is largely the condition the church will be in after the fall of Antichrist.

I will first show how the success of Christ's redemption is carried forward during the church's time of suffering — from the resurrection of Christ to the fall of Antichrist. This entire span of time

is, for the most part, a period of suffering for the church, and Scripture consistently represents it this way. God does, out of love and compassion for His elect, grant many periods of relief from suffering during this time, so that the days of tribulation are shortened in measure. But from Christ's resurrection until the fall of Antichrist is the appointed season of Zion's troubles. Throughout most of this time, some part of the church is under persecution — and for much of the time, the whole church, or at least the large majority of God's people, has been persecuted.

For the first three hundred years after Christ, the church was for the most part in a state of great affliction — exposed to reproach and persecution, first by the Jews and then by the pagans. After this, beginning with Constantine's time, the church enjoyed a period of rest and prosperity for a while — pictured in Revelation 7 at the opening, by the angel holding back the four winds for a season. But soon after, the church again suffered persecution from the Arians. Then Antichrist arose, and the church was driven into the wilderness and kept down in obscurity, contempt, and suffering for a long time under Antichrist — until the Reformation through Luther and others. Since the Reformation, the church's persecutions have surpassed all that came before. Though some parts of God's church have at times had rest, for the most part the true church remains greatly oppressed by its enemies to this day, with some parts of it under severe persecution. We can expect this to continue until the fall of Antichrist — and then will come the appointed day of the church's prosperity on earth, the set time when God will favor Zion. This will be the time when the saints are no longer kept under by the wicked, as has been the case until now, but will prevail and reign on earth, as Revelation 5:10 says. And as

Daniel 7:27 declares: 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.'

Scripture represents this suffering state of the church as a season of travail, as in John 16:20-21 and Revelation 12:1-2. What the church labors to bring forth during this time is the glory and prosperity that will come after the fall of Antichrist — and then she will give birth to her child. It is a long period of trouble and affliction for the church, and Scripture speaks of it as such — though it also calls it a 'little while' in comparison with the church's eternal prosperity. Under the long continuation of this suffering, the church cries out as in Revelation 6:10: 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And the response was given: 'a white robe was given to each of them; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.' Similarly, Daniel 12:6 asks: 'How long will it be until the end of these wonders?'

It should be noted that throughout the church's time of suffering, the main instrument of that suffering has been the Roman government — the church's afflictions have come almost entirely from Rome. This is why Rome is called Babylon in the New Testament: just as the troubles of the ancient city of Jerusalem came mainly from the opposing city of Babylon, so the troubles of the Christian church — the spiritual Jerusalem — throughout its long period of tribulation have come mainly from Rome. Before Constantine's time, the troubles of the Christian church came from pagan Rome. Since that time, they have come mainly from

Antichristian Rome. Just as the captivity of the Jews ended with the destruction of Babylon, so the time of trouble for the Christian church will end with the destruction of the church of Rome — that spiritual Babylon.

In showing how the success of Christ's redemption advanced during the church's time of suffering, I will cover three things:

1. How it advanced until the destruction of Jerusalem, which ended the first great display of God's providence known as Christ's coming in His kingdom.

2. How it advanced from that point to the destruction of the pagan empire in Constantine's time, which is the second event known as Christ's coming.

3. How it advances from that point to the destruction of Antichrist, when the third great event known as Christ's coming will take place, and the days of the church's suffering and labor will end.

I. I will show how the success of Christ's purchased redemption advanced from His resurrection to the destruction of Jerusalem. In discussing this, I will: 1. describe the success itself; 2. note the opposition raised against it by its enemies; and 3. describe the terrible judgments of God on those enemies.

1. I will describe the success itself. Soon after Christ had finished purchasing redemption, ascended into heaven, and entered the holy of holies with His own blood, a glorious success began flowing from what He had done and suffered. Having undermined the foundation of Satan's kingdom, it began to collapse rapidly. It rushed toward ruin across the world, which could well be compared to Satan falling like lightning from heaven. Satan had previ-

ously raised his throne very high in this world, even to the very stars of heaven, reigning with great glory in his pagan Roman empire. But he had never experienced such a downfall as the one that came soon after Christ's ascension. We can suppose that Satan had very recently been celebrating what he thought was a victory, having brought about the death of Christ. He no doubt gloried in this as the greatest achievement he had ever accomplished, and probably imagined he had totally defeated God's plan. But Satan quickly realized that he had only been destroying his own kingdom when he saw it crumbling so fast as a direct result of Christ's death. For Christ, through His death, had purchased the Holy Spirit. After ascending and receiving the Spirit, He poured it out abundantly for the conversion of thousands and millions of souls.

Never had Christ's kingdom been so established in the world. More souls were probably converted in the age of the apostles than had been converted from the beginning of the world up to that time. In this way, God quickly and gloriously began to fulfill His promise to His Son — that He would see His offspring, and that the purpose of the Lord would prosper in His hand, if He would make His soul an offering for sin. And,

(1) Here we should notice the success the gospel had among the Jews, because God began with them first. Since He was about to reject the main body of that people, He first called His elect out from among them before He turned to the Gentiles. This pattern appeared in earlier great and terrible judgments of God on that nation: the majority were destroyed, and only a remnant was saved or reformed. The same thing happened in the rejection of the ten tribes, long before this later rejection. The majority of the ten tribes were rejected when they abandoned the true worship of God

in Jeroboam's time, and later more fully in Ahab's time. Yet there was a remnant that God preserved. A number of people left their possessions in those tribes and went to settle in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. And afterward, there were seven thousand in Ahab's time who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Likewise, in the Babylonian captivity, only a remnant ever returned to their own land. And so now again, by far the greater part of the people were entirely rejected, but some few were saved. The Holy Spirit compares this preservation of a number who were converted by the apostles' preaching to those earlier remnants: Romans 9:27. Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." See Isaiah 10:22.

The glorious success of the gospel among the Jews after Christ's ascension began with the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which we read about in Acts 2. The outpouring of the Spirit was so wonderful and its effect so remarkable and swift that three thousand people were converted to the Christian faith in a single day, as recorded in Acts 2:41. The greater part of these were probably genuinely converted. After this, we read of God adding to the church daily those who were being saved, in verse 47. Soon after, we read that the number of believers was about five thousand. Not only were many converted, but the church was also outstanding in its devotion, as we can see in Acts 2:46-47 and 4:32.

The Christian church was first made up entirely of the nation of Israel. So when the Gentiles were called, they were essentially added to Israel, to the offspring of Abraham. They were added to the Christian church of Israel, just as converts in earlier times were

added to the Mosaic church of Israel. They were grafted onto the stock of Abraham and were not a separate tree, for they are all still the offspring of Abraham and Israel. Ruth the Moabitess, Uriah the Hittite, and other earlier converts were counted as the same people and ranked as the offspring of Israel.

The Christian church first began at Jerusalem, and from there it spread to all nations. The church of Jerusalem was like a mother to all other churches in the world, in agreement with the prophecy. Isaiah 2:3-4. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people." So the whole church of God is still God's Jerusalem. They are His spiritual Jerusalem, and they are essentially added to the church that began in the literal Jerusalem.

After this, we read of many thousands of Jews who believed in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 21:20. We also read of large numbers of Jews who were converted in other cities of Judea, and not only there, but in other parts of the world as well. Wherever the apostles went, if there were any Jews there, their practice was to first go into the Jewish synagogues and preach the gospel to them. Many believed in one place after another, as in Damascus and Antioch, and many other places that we read about in the Acts of the Apostles.

In this outpouring of the Spirit, which began at the Pentecost following Christ's ascension, the first great event known as Christ's coming in His kingdom began. Christ's coming in this spiritual manner to gloriously establish His kingdom in the world is described by Christ Himself as His coming down from heaven, to which He had already ascended. In John 14:18, having spoken of His ascension, He says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will

come to you" — referring to His coming through the Comforter, the Spirit of truth. And in verse 28, "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.'" In this way the apostles began to see the kingdom of heaven come with power, as He had promised they would, in Mark 9:1.

(2) The next success to note is that of the gospel among the Samaritans. After the gospel had so gloriously begun its work among the Jews, the Spirit of God was next poured out in a remarkable way on the Samaritans. They were not Jews by ancestry but the descendants of people the king of Assyria had relocated from various parts of his empire to settle in the land left by the ten tribes after they were taken captive. They had received the five books of Moses and practiced most of the Mosaic rites, making them a kind of mixed people with Jewish elements. They are not counted as Gentiles in the New Testament — the calling of the Gentiles is spoken of as something new after this, beginning with the conversion of Cornelius. But this was still a striking instance of making a people out of those who were not a people. They had corrupted the religion Moses prescribed and did not worship in Jerusalem but had their own temple on Mount Gerizim. This is the mountain the woman of Samaria refers to when she says, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain." Christ did not approve of their separation from the Jews, but told the woman of Samaria that they worshiped what they did not know, and that salvation is from the Jews. But now salvation was brought from the Jews to them through the preaching of Philip (though Christ had already had some success among them before). There was a glorious outpouring of the Spirit in the city of Samaria. We are told that "the people

believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of Christ, and were baptized, both men and women, and that there was great joy in that city," Acts 8:8-12.

Christ thus had a glorious harvest in Samaria. This seems to be what He had in mind when He spoke to His disciples at Jacob's well three or four years before, prompted by the sight of the Samaritans coming toward Him in the distance at the urging of the woman of Samaria. On that occasion He told His disciples to lift up their eyes to the fields, for they were already white for harvest, John 4:35-36. The openness the Samaritans had shown toward Christ and the gospel proved they were ripe for the harvest. Now the harvest came through Philip's preaching. There had long been a deep and bitter hostility between Jews and Samaritans. But now, through their conversion, Jewish and Samaritan Christians were happily united, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Samaritan — Christ is all in all. This was a glorious picture of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the young goat.

(3) The next thing to note is the success of the gospel in calling the Gentiles. This was a great and glorious act of divine providence, spoken of extensively in Old Testament prophecy and referenced repeatedly by the apostles as one of the most glorious results of Christ's redemption. It began with the conversion of Cornelius and his family, to the great amazement of Peter — who served as the instrument of it — and of those with him and those who heard about it afterward, as you can see in Acts 10 and 11. The next recorded instance was the conversion of large numbers of Gentiles in Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch by disciples scattered through the

persecution that arose around Stephen, as described in Acts 11:19-21. Right after this, the disciples first began to be called Christians at Antioch, in verse 26.

After this, vast numbers of Gentiles were converted in many other parts of the world, chiefly through the ministry of the apostle Paul, with a glorious outpouring of the Spirit accompanying his preaching from place to place. Crowds flocked into the church of Christ in city after city where he came. Within less than ten years of Paul being sent out from Antioch to preach to the Gentiles, it was said of him and his companions that they had turned the world upside down. Acts 17:6: "These men who have upset the world have come here also." The most remarkable outpouring of the Spirit in a single city recorded in the New Testament appears to have been in Ephesus, a very great city, as described in Acts 19. There was also an extraordinary gathering of souls at Corinth, one of the greatest cities in all of Greece. After this, many were converted in Rome, the leading city of the entire world, and the gospel spread throughout the Roman empire. So the gospel sun, which had only recently risen on the Jews, now rose upon the pagan world and began to enlighten it after it had remained in deep pagan darkness for so many ages.

This was a great and entirely new thing — nothing like it had ever happened before. From roughly the time of Moses onward, all nations except the Jews and a few who had from time to time joined with them had been shut out. The Gentile world had been covered in the thick darkness of idolatry. But now, at the joyful and glorious sound of the gospel, people in every part of the world began to turn away from their old idols, to despise them and cast them aside, and to learn to worship the true God and trust in His

Son Jesus Christ. God claimed them as His people. Those who had so long been far off were brought near by the blood of Christ. People were transformed from being pagan and brutal into children of God. They were called out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and brought into God's marvelous light. In nearly every country throughout the known world, assemblies of God's people gathered, and joyful praise was offered to the true God and to Jesus Christ the glorious Redeemer. Now that great building which God had begun soon after the fall of man rose gloriously — not in the same manner as in former ages, but in an entirely new way. Now Daniel's prophecies concerning the last kingdom, which would follow the four pagan empires, began to be fulfilled. The stone cut out of the mountain without human hands began to strike the statue on its feet and break it to pieces, growing great and advancing toward filling the earth. Now God gathered His elect from the four winds of heaven through the preaching of the apostles and other ministers — the messengers of the Christian church sent forth with the great sound of the gospel trumpet — before the destruction of Jerusalem, just as Christ foretold in Matthew 24:31.

This was the success of Christ's purchase during the first period of the Christian church, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. I will now turn to the opposition brought against this success of Christ's purchase by its enemies. Satan — who had so recently been ready to boast as though he had won the victory by putting Christ to death — now found himself fallen into the very pit he had dug. Watching his kingdom collapse so rapidly and seeing Christ's kingdom making such astonishing progress as had never occurred before, he must have been filled with the greatest confusion and

alarm. Hell itself seemed fully roused to mount the most violent opposition possible. First, the devil stirred up the Jews — who had already crucified Christ — to persecute the church. It is worth noting that the persecution the church endured during this period came mostly from the Jews. As we read in Acts, when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Jews mocked, saying, "These men are full of new wine." The scribes and Pharisees, along with the captain of the temple guard, were alarmed and moved to oppose and persecute the apostles. They first arrested and threatened them, then imprisoned and beat them. Breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, they stoned Stephen in a furious rage. Not satisfied with persecuting those they could find in Judea, they sent agents to Damascus and other places to hunt down believers wherever they could be found. Herod, who held the chief authority among them, stretched out his hand to harm the church. He killed James with the sword and then arrested Peter as well, throwing him into prison.

In other countries as well, wherever the apostles went, the Jews almost everywhere opposed the gospel in the most hostile way, contradicting and blaspheming. How much the blessed apostle Paul suffered at their hands from place to place! How violent and murderous they showed themselves toward him when he came to bring financial aid to his own people! In this persecution and cruelty, Christ's words in Matthew 23:34 were fulfilled: "I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from city to city."

3. I will now describe the judgments that fell on these enemies of Christ — the persecuting Jews.

(1) The majority of the people were given over to a judicial blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Christ pronounced this judgment on them during His earthly ministry, as recorded in Matthew 13:14-15. This curse was also pronounced on them by the apostle Paul in Acts 28:25-27. Under this curse — this judicial blindness and hardness — they have remained to this very day, now about 1,700 years. They are the most striking and terrible example of such a judgment, and the most solemn monument of God's dreadful vengeance, of any people who have ever existed. That they should continue from generation to generation so stubbornly to reject Christ — so that it is an extremely rare thing for even one of them to be converted to the Christian faith, even though their own Old Testament Scriptures, which they acknowledge, are full of plain testimony against them — is a remarkable evidence of their having been terribly abandoned by God.

(2) They were rejected and cut off from being God's visible people any longer. They were broken off from the family of Abraham, and since then have been no more counted as his offspring than the Ishmaelites or Edomites, who are just as much his natural descendants as they are. The greater part of the two tribes were now cast off, just as the ten tribes had been before them, and another people were brought in to take their place. This fulfilled the predictions of their own prophets. Moses declared in Deuteronomy 32:21, "They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." And Isaiah said in Isaiah 65:1, "I per-

mitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me." They were visibly rejected and cut off when God directed His apostles to turn away from them. Acts 13:46-47 records, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. But since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us.'" See also Acts 18:6 and Acts 28:28.

Up to this point we have had Scripture history to guide us. From here on, we will be guided by two things only: biblical prophecy and God's providence as recorded in human histories. I proceed.

(3) The third and final judgment of God on these enemies of the Gospel's success was the terrible destruction of their city and nation by the Romans. Many warnings and means had been used with them before this destruction. First, John the Baptist warned them — telling them the axe was already laid at the root of the tree, and that every tree that did not bear good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire. Then Christ warned them in great detail, telling them of their coming destruction, and wept over them at the thought of it. Then the apostles after Christ's ascension warned them repeatedly. But they proved stubborn and continued in their opposition to Christ and His church, pressing on with their bitter persecution. Their savage persecution of the apostle Paul — described toward the end of Acts — is thought to have occurred no more than seven or eight years before the destruction.

After this, God was pleased to give them one more remarkable warning through the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews — written to the Jewish nation, as is commonly understood, about

four years before their destruction. In it, the clearest and most compelling arguments drawn from their own law and from the prophets they claimed to honor are laid before them: that Christ Jesus must be the Son of God, that all their law pointed to Him and foreshadowed Him, and that the Jewish dispensation must by now have come to an end. Though the letter was addressed most immediately to Hebrew Christians, the content makes plain that the apostle intended it also for the conviction of unbelieving Jews. In that letter he specifically mentions the approaching destruction, as in Hebrews 10:25: 'And all the more as you see the day drawing near.' And in verse 27 he speaks of the approaching judgment and the fury of fire that would consume the adversaries.

But the majority refused to accept the warning, and God soon destroyed them under circumstances so terrible that no destruction of any city or country since the foundation of the world can compare — in fulfillment of what Christ foretold in Matthew 24:21: 'For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.' The first destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians had been dreadful, described in the most moving terms by the prophet Jeremiah in his Lamentations — but it was nothing compared to the misery and wrath that fell in this destruction. God, as Christ had foretold, brought upon them all the righteous blood that had been shed from the foundation of the world. So the enemies of Christ were made His footstool after His ascension, in fulfillment of God's promise in Psalm 110 from the beginning. Christ ruled them with a rod of iron. They had been kicking against Christ — but they had

been kicking against the goads. The briars and thorns set themselves against Him in battle, but He went through them and burned them together.

This destruction of Jerusalem corresponded precisely to what Christ had foretold about it in Matthew 24, according to the account of Josephus — who was present at the time, was himself one of the Jews who shared in the calamity, and wrote the history of their destruction. Many details of the destruction, by his account, resembled the final judgment of the wicked — accomplished with terrifying signs in the heavens and with the separation of the righteous from the wicked. Their city and temple were burned and razed to the ground, and the ground on which the city stood was plowed. Not one stone was left upon another, as Matthew 24:2 had foretold.

The people had largely ceased to be an independent nation after the Babylonian captivity. The scepter departed entirely from Judah at the death of Archelaus, when Judea was made a Roman province. After that they were cut off from being the people of God. And now their very city and land were utterly destroyed and they were scattered from it — and they have remained in their dispersions throughout the world for now about 1,600 years.

So there was a final end to the Old Testament world — all brought to a close in a kind of day of judgment, in which the people of God were preserved and their enemies terribly destroyed. And so He who had so recently been mocked, despised, and spat upon by the Jews — while His followers were maliciously persecuted — appeared gloriously exalted over His enemies.

Having shown how the success of Christ's purchase was carried forward up to the destruction of Jerusalem, I now come to:

2. Show how it was carried on from that time to the destruction of the pagan empire in the time of Constantine the Great — the second great event that Scripture compares to Christ's coming to judgment.

Jerusalem was destroyed around the year AD 68 — before that generation which had been contemporaries with Christ had passed away, and about thirty-five years after Christ's death. The destruction of the pagan empire under Constantine came about 260 years after this. In showing how the success of the Gospel was carried on through this period, I will: 1. Note the opposition brought against it by the Roman empire. 2. Show how the work of the Gospel continued despite all that opposition. 3. Describe the peculiar circumstances of tribulation and distress the church faced just before its deliverance under Constantine. 4. Describe the great revolution in Constantine's time.

1. I will briefly describe the opposition brought against the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ by the Roman empire. The opposition from the pagan Roman empire came mainly after the destruction of Jerusalem, though it had begun before — but the earlier opposition had come primarily from the Jews. Once Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews were stripped of much of their capacity to trouble the church. The devil therefore turned his hand elsewhere and found new instruments to use. The opposition raised in the Roman empire against the kingdom of Christ took mainly two forms.

(1) They used all their learning, philosophy, and intellectual skill to oppose it. Christ came into the world at a time when learning and philosophy were at their peak in the Roman empire — and all of this was pressed into service against the kingdom of Christ. The Gospel, which proclaimed a crucified Savior, was deeply offensive to the philosophers' way of thinking. The Christian message of trusting in a crucified Redeemer struck them as foolish and absurd. Greece was the most celebrated center of learning in the Roman empire, and the apostle notes that the doctrine of Christ crucified appeared to be foolishness to the Greeks — 1 Corinthians 1:23. So the philosophers and learned men opposed the Gospel with all the intellectual force they had. We have an example of their manner of opposition in the account of how they treated the apostle Paul at Athens — a city that had been for many ages the leading seat of philosophy in the entire world. Acts 17:18 records that the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him, saying, 'What is this babbler trying to say? He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities.' This derision and mockery of Christianity was characteristic of them. After the destruction of Jerusalem, several philosophers published books against Christianity — chief among them Celsus and Porphyry. These men attacked the Christian faith with great hostility and contempt, much in the way that the Deists of the present day oppose and ridicule it. Portions of their writings still survive. As hostile and contemptuous of Christianity as they were, they never denied the events recorded of Christ and His apostles in the New Testament — including the miracles — but rather acknowledged them. They lived too close to the time when those miracles were performed to

deny them. The miracles had been done so publicly and so recently that neither Jews nor pagans of that day attempted to deny them. They simply attributed them to magic.

(2) The authority of the Roman empire used all its power, time and time again, to persecute Christianity and, if possible, to eradicate it entirely. This was attempted in ten successive empire-wide persecutions. As we have noted, Christ came into the world when pagan power and authority were at their highest point under the Roman monarchy — the greatest and most powerful human empire that had ever existed on earth. All the strength of this empire was employed for a long time to oppose and persecute the Christian church and, if possible, to destroy it — in ten successive attempts known as the ten pagan persecutions, which all preceded Constantine.

The first of these — the persecution under Nero — came shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. In it the apostle Peter was crucified and the apostle Paul was beheaded, soon after Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy. When Paul wrote that letter he was a prisoner in Rome under Nero, and he was beheaded shortly after writing it, as he himself foresaw in 2 Timothy 4:6-7: 'I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.' Many thousands of other Christians were also killed in that persecution. The other nine persecutions all came after the destruction of Jerusalem. Some of these were extremely severe — far exceeding the first persecution under Nero. One emperor after another set himself with the utmost fury to root out the Christian church from the earth so that not even the name of Christian would remain in the world. Thousands and millions were

put to cruel deaths in these persecutions, with no mercy shown toward either sex or age — they were killed as fast as possible. Under the second general persecution — the one following the destruction of Jerusalem — the apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos, where he received the visions he recorded in Revelation. Under that persecution it is estimated that about 40,000 suffered martyrdom — and yet that number was nothing compared to those killed in later persecutions. Ten thousand suffered crucifixion alone in the third persecution under the emperor Hadrian. Under the fourth persecution, which began around AD 162, many suffered martyrdom in England — the land of our forefathers — where Christianity had been planted very early, understood to have been during the apostles' own time. In the later persecutions, the Roman emperors — frustrated that their predecessors had been unable to exterminate Christianity or stop its spread — grew all the more violent in their efforts.

So a large part of the first 300 years after Christ was spent in violent and cruel persecutions of the church by the Roman authorities. Satan was extremely unwilling to let go of so great a portion of the world — indeed the most powerful part of it — over which he had held undisturbed possession for so many ages. When he saw it slipping from his grasp so rapidly, he exerted himself to the fullest extent, and hell was, as it were, fully roused to oppose it with every power it had.

Satan exerting himself through the power of the pagan Roman empire is what Scripture calls 'the great red dragon' — having seven heads and ten horns — fighting against the woman clothed with the sun, as Revelation 12 describes. The terrible conflict between the church of Christ and the pagan empire before

Constantine's time is portrayed in that chapter, verse 7, as war between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels: 'And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war.'

2. I will note the success the Gospel had in the world before the time of Constantine, despite all this opposition. Though the learning and power of the Roman empire were so great, and both were pressed to their utmost against Christianity — to stop it and root it out — for such a long time and through so many repeated attempts, all of it was in vain. They could neither eradicate it nor halt its spread. Instead, despite everything they could do, the kingdom of Christ continued to advance remarkably, and Satan's pagan kingdom crumbled and wasted away before it — in keeping with the words: 'The moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.' It was widely observed that for the most part, the more the church was persecuted, the more it grew — so much so that it became a common saying: 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' The church of Christ proved to be like a palm tree — a tree noted for the property that the greater the weight placed upon it or hung from its branches, the more it grows and flourishes. This is perhaps why the church is compared to a palm tree in Song of Solomon 7:7: 'Your stature is like a palm tree.' Justin Martyr, a prominent early church father who lived in the generation just after the apostles, writes in surviving works that in his day there was no part of humanity — whether Greeks or barbarians, or by whatever name they were called, even the most primitive nations — where prayers and thanksgiving were not being offered to the great Creator through the name of the crucified Jesus. Tertullian, another prominent early church father writing in

the following age, describes in surviving works how the Christian faith had extended in his day to the furthest boundaries of the known world — including Britain, the land of our forefathers. He argues from this that the kingdom of Christ was already more extensive than any of the four great ancient empires. He further writes that though Christians were relative newcomers, they had filled every corner of the Roman territories — their cities, islands, forts, towns, councils, armies, regions, the imperial palace, the senate, and the courts of law — leaving only the temples to the pagans. He adds that if all Christians were to withdraw from the empire, the world would be astonished at the emptiness and desolation that would follow, so few non-Christians would remain — and that the Christians were numerous enough to easily defend themselves by force if they chose to resist the pagan authorities. Even the pagan writer Pliny, who lived in that era, wrote that multitudes of both sexes, every age and rank, had become Christians, and that this faith had spread not only through the city but through towns and countryside, so that the temples and sacrifices were generally empty and abandoned.

Both pagan and Christian writers of that era noted something remarkable: the famous pagan oracles in the temples — where princes and others had for many ages been accustomed to inquire and receive audible answers from their gods (answers which were in truth from the devil) — had now fallen silent and gave no more responses. Especially notable was the oracle at Delphi — the most celebrated pagan oracle in the world, consulted by both Greeks and Romans — which had begun to cease giving answers from the very birth of Christ. When the false deity worshiped there was once asked why he no longer gave answers as he used to, he reportedly

replied (as several pagan historians of that time record): 'There is a Hebrew boy who is king of the gods, who has commanded me to leave this house and go to the place of the dead — therefore you should expect no more answers.' Many pagan writers of that time wrote at length about the silencing of the oracles, expressing wonder at it and being unable to explain the cause. Plutarch, a pagan writer of that era, wrote an entire treatise on the subject, which still survives. And Porphyry — one of the pagan writers mentioned earlier who opposed Christianity — wrote these words: 'It is no wonder if the city has been overrun with sickness for so many years, since Asclepius and the rest of the gods have withdrawn their presence from among men — for since Jesus began to be worshiped, no man has received any public help or benefit from the gods.'

So the kingdom of Christ prevailed over the kingdom of Satan.

3. I now turn to take note of the particular circumstances of tribulation and distress immediately before Constantine the Great came to the throne. This distress was the result of the tenth pagan persecution — which, being the last, was by far the heaviest and most severe. Before this, the church had enjoyed a period of peace lasting about forty years after the ninth persecution ended. But abusing their freedom, they had grown cold and lifeless in religion, and contentiousness spread among them — by which they provoked God to allow this dreadful trial to come upon them. Satan, having lost so much ground despite all his attempts, now seemed to stir himself with extraordinary fury. Those then in power set themselves with extreme violence to root out Christianity — burning all Bibles and destroying all Christians. They did not bother with formal legal proceedings but fell upon Christians wherever

they could find them — sometimes setting fire to buildings where large numbers were assembled and burning them all alive, other times slaughtering large groups at once. At times the persecutors grew exhausted from the labor of killing and torturing. In some densely populated places, so many were killed at once that blood ran in streams. It is recorded that seventeen thousand martyrs were killed in a single month. During this one persecution, in the province of Egypt alone, no fewer than 144,000 Christians died at the hands of their persecutors, in addition to 700,000 who died from the hardships of exile or the forced labor camps to which they were condemned.

This persecution lasted ten years — and as it surpassed all previous persecutions in the number of martyrs, so it surpassed them in the variety and number of methods of torture and cruelty. Authors who lived through that time say the forms of cruelty were beyond counting and beyond any adequate description.

This persecution was especially severe in England. It is this persecution that was foretold in Revelation 6:9-10: "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

At the end of the ten years this persecution lasted, the pagan persecutors believed they had finished their work. They boasted that they had utterly destroyed the name and religion of the Christians, and had restored and spread the worship of the gods.

So it was the darkest hour for the Christian church just before the dawn. They were brought to their greatest extremity just before God appeared for their glorious deliverance — just as the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt was most severe and brutal right before their deliverance through Moses. Their enemies believed they had swallowed them up, just before their own destruction came — just as Pharaoh and his army thought when they had trapped the children of Israel at the Red Sea.

4. I come now to the great revolution that took place in the world in the days of Constantine, which in many ways resembled Christ appearing in the clouds of heaven to save His people and judge the world. The people of Rome, weary of the tyrants who had recently ruled them, sent to Constantine — who was then in the city of York in England — to come and take the throne. He was encouraged, as the account goes, by a vision of a pillar of light in the sky in the shape of a cross, seen by his entire army, with the inscription, "In this, overcome." The following night, Christ appeared to him in a dream holding the same cross, directing him to make a cross like it as his royal standard so that his army would fight under that banner, and assuring him that he would prevail. He did so, overcame his enemies, took possession of the imperial throne, embraced the Christian faith, and became the first Christian emperor ever to reign. He came to the throne about 320 years after Christ. Several things attended or immediately followed Constantine's rise to power.

(1) The Christian church was completely delivered from persecution. The day of deliverance came after such a long, dark night of affliction. Weeping had continued through the night, but now deliverance and joy came in the morning. God appeared to vindicate

His people, taking compassion on His servants when He saw that their strength was gone and no one was left to help. Christians had nothing more to fear from persecution. Their persecutors were all overthrown, and some of their rulers were now fellow Christians.

(2) God now appeared to execute terrible judgments on their enemies. History gives us remarkable accounts of the dreadful ends to which the pagan emperors, princes, generals, captains, and other powerful men came — those who had devoted themselves to persecuting Christians. They died miserably, one after another, under extreme physical torment and anguish of conscience, with the visible hand of God upon them. What happened could fittingly be compared to people hiding themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

(3) Paganism was now largely abolished throughout the Roman empire. Idols were destroyed and pagan temples torn down. Images of gold and silver were melted down and minted into coins. Some of the finest idols, skillfully crafted, were brought to Constantinople and dragged through the streets on ropes for the people to see and mock. The pagan priests were scattered and banished.

(4) The Christian church was brought into a state of great peace and prosperity. All pagan officials were removed, and only Christians were elevated to positions of authority throughout the empire. There were now Christian governors, Christian judges, and Christian officers in place of the old pagan ones. Constantine devoted himself to honoring Christian bishops and ministers and to building and beautifying churches. Large and beautiful Christian churches were erected throughout the world to replace the old pagan temples.

This revolution was the greatest change in the face of things that had occurred in the world since the flood. Satan — the prince of darkness, the king and god of the pagan world — was cast out. The roaring lion was conquered by the Lamb of God in the strongest dominion Satan had ever held: the Roman empire. This was a remarkable fulfillment of Jeremiah 10:11: "The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under these heavens." The greater part of the world was brought to utterly abandon their old gods and their old religion — customs they had followed for longer than any of their histories could trace. They had worshiped their gods for so long that they knew no beginning of it. It was formerly spoken of as an unheard-of thing for a nation to change its gods, as Jeremiah 2:10-11 notes. But now the greater part of the nations of the known world were brought to cast off their former gods. That vast multitude of gods they had worshiped were all forsaken. Thousands of idols were cast away for the worship of the true God and Christ the only Savior. There was a most remarkable fulfillment of Isaiah 2:17-18: "The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. And the idols will completely vanish." Since that time, those gods once so famous in the world — Jupiter, Saturn, Minerva, Juno, and the rest — are known only as things of the distant past. They have no temples, no altars, no worshipers, and have had none for many hundreds of years.

The old pagan world had now come to an end in its most dominant part — the Roman empire. This great revolution and transformation of the world, along with the terrible destruction of the powerful men who had persecuted the church, is compared in

Revelation 6 to the end of the world and Christ coming to judgment. It is what is most immediately described under the sixth seal — which followed upon the souls under the altar crying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' By the general consensus of theologians and commentators, this vision of the sixth seal refers to the fall of the pagan Roman empire — though it also has a more distant reference to the final day of judgment, of which this was a type. The day of judgment cannot be what is immediately intended, since we are told of many events still to occur under the seventh seal — events to follow those of the sixth. What now took place is also represented by the devil being cast out of heaven to the earth. In his great strength and glory — through that mighty Roman empire — he had as it were exalted his throne to heaven. But now he fell like lightning from heaven and was confined to the earth. His kingdom was reduced to the more barbarous nations and the lower parts of the world. This is the event foretold in Revelation 12:9: 'And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.' Satan had tempted Christ and promised to give Him the glory of the kingdoms of the world — but now he was forced to surrender it to Him against his will. This was a glorious fulfillment of the promise God made to His Son in Isaiah 53:12: 'Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.' This was a great fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies

concerning the glorious age of the Gospel — and particularly the prophecies of Daniel. The kingdom of heaven had now come in a glorious degree. The Lord God of heaven was pleased to establish a kingdom on the ruins of Satan's kingdom. Such is the fruit of Christ's purchase of redemption — and such the honor the Father bestows on Christ for the disgrace He bore while on earth. See now to what height that glorious building has risen — the building that had been under construction since the fall of man.

Observation. From what has been said about the success of the Gospel from Christ's ascension to the time of Constantine, we can draw a strong argument for the truth of the Christian religion — that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is genuinely from God. The remarkable success described, and the specific circumstances surrounding it, make a compelling case in several ways.

1. We may conclude from what has been said that it is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, that has actually brought the world to the knowledge of the true God. That the gods the pagans worshiped are no gods, and that there is only one God — this is something we can see to be true by our own reason now that the Gospel has taught us. It is plainly consistent with the light of nature, and can be demonstrated by reason to be clearly true. Even the Deists themselves acknowledge that the existence of one God — who made and governs the world — can be demonstrated. But it is clear that it is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, that has actually been the means of bringing people to the knowledge of this truth. It was not the instruction of philosophers — they tried and failed. 'The world through its wisdom did not come to know God.' Until the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures were spread abroad in the world, all of humanity lay in ignorance of the true God and in the deepest

darkness in matters of religion — embracing the most absurd beliefs and practices, which all civilized nations now recognize to be childish foolishness. So they remained, age after age, and nothing proved capable of enlightening them. The light of nature, their own reason, and all the wisdom of learned men accomplished nothing — until the Scriptures came. But when the Scriptures spread, they succeeded in bringing the world to acknowledge the one true God and to worship and serve Him.

This is why all the people in the world who today acknowledge one true God — Christians, Jews, Muslims, and even Deists — originally came to that knowledge through the Scriptures. It is because of the Scriptures that they are not still living in pagan darkness today. All of them obtained this knowledge either directly from the Scriptures or through tradition from ancestors who first received it from the Scriptures. Those who now despise the Scriptures and boast of the power of their own reason as sufficient to lead them to the knowledge of one God — had the Gospel never been spread to enlighten their forefathers, they would undoubtedly have been as foolish and degraded in idolatry as the world generally was before the Gospel came. The Muslims, who affirm one true God, originally borrowed the idea from the Scriptures — for the first Muslims had been raised in the Christian faith and had apostatized from it. This makes it clear that the Scriptures were designed by God to be the proper means of bringing the world to knowledge of Himself — not human reason or anything else. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Gospel alone — which God supposedly never designed as the proper means for this — would actually achieve it, while human reason — supposedly the right means — was tried for many ages without any effect. If the Scriptures are

not the word of God, then they are nothing but darkness and delusion — indeed the greatest delusion that has ever existed. Is it reasonable to suppose that God, in His providence, would use falsehood and delusion alone to bring the world to the knowledge of Himself, and that no part of the world would come to know Him in any other way?

2. The Gospel's advance against such powerful opposition plainly shows the hand of God. The Roman government, which set itself so violently to hinder the Gospel's success and subdue the church of Christ, was the most powerful human government that had ever existed in the world. Not only that, but they seemed to hold the church entirely in their hands — most Christians were their subjects, under their authority, and never took up arms in self-defense. They never gathered together to fight back; they armed themselves with nothing but patience and other spiritual weapons. And yet that mighty power could not conquer them. On the contrary, Christianity conquered it. The Roman empire had subdued the world. They had overcome many mighty and powerful kingdoms — including the Greek empire, when the Greeks were not under their control and put up the strongest possible resistance. Yet they could not conquer the church that was already in their grip. Instead they were subdued by it and finally overcome.

3. No other sufficient cause can possibly be given for this spread of the Gospel except the power of God alone. No other explanation can be devised. Certainly some cause there was. Here was a great and remarkable effect — the most significant change in the face of human civilization since the flood — and such an effect did not come without a cause. What cause can be named other than the divine power? It was not the outward strength of the in-

struments used. At first the Gospel was preached by a handful of fishermen, without power or worldly influence to support them. It was not their cleverness or strategy that produced this remarkable effect — they were poor, uneducated men. It was not that their message was agreeable to popular thought and values. This was no pleasant story — a crucified God and Savior was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It was not that their doctrines suited the natural inclinations of people — nothing is more contrary to human corruption than the pure doctrines of the Gospel. This effect therefore can only have come from the power and agency of God. And if God's power was what caused the Gospel to prevail, then the Gospel is His word — for surely God does not employ His almighty power to advance a mere fraud and delusion.

4. This success precisely matches what Christ and His apostles had foretold. Matthew 16:18: 'I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.' John 12:24: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' And John 12:31-32: 'Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' John 16:8: 'He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment — because the ruler of this world has been judged.'

So the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:21-28, declares that after the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe — choosing the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the weak things to shame the strong, and the

base and despised things — things that are not — to do away with the things that are. When someone predicts something that appears likely to happen from causes that can already be seen in motion, it is no great evidence of a revelation from God. But when a prediction is made about something that appears highly unlikely — entirely contrary to the normal course of events — and it comes to pass exactly as predicted, this is a strong argument that the prediction came from God.

So the manner of the spread and success of the Gospel during the period we have been examining provides strong evidence that the Scriptures are the word of God.

3. I will now show how the success of Christ's redemption is carried forward from the overthrow of the pagan Roman empire in Constantine's time to the fall of Antichrist and the destruction of Satan's visible kingdom on earth — which is the third great providential event that Scripture compares to Christ's coming to judgment. This is a period in which many great and remarkable things take place. It contains a long series of wonders of divine providence toward the Christian church. The greater part of the book of Revelation is devoted to foretelling the events of this period.

The success of Christ's purchase of redemption in this period appears most clearly at its close — when Antichrist falls and there will be a far more glorious success of the Gospel than has ever been seen before. The long series of events that precede it seem designed only to prepare the way for it. In order to see clearly the great works of God in accomplishing the success of Christ's redemption, and to appreciate their glory, it will be necessary — as we have done in previous periods — to consider not only the success itself, but also the opposition brought against it, and the great

works of Satan in this period against the church and kingdom of Christ. Therefore, in reviewing this period, I will take note of events that fall under two headings: Satan's opposition to the success of Christ's redemption, and the success of Christ's redemption itself. For an orderly treatment, I will divide this period into four parts: the first from the destruction of the pagan empire to the rise of Antichrist; the second from the rise of Antichrist to the Reformation in Luther's time; the third from there to the present; and the fourth from the present until Antichrist falls and Satan's visible kingdom on earth is destroyed.

First, I will consider the events of the first part of this period — from the destruction of the pagan empire to the rise of Antichrist. Here I will first take note of the opposition Satan made against the church during this time, and second, the success the Gospel had in it.

1. The opposition. Satan, having been cast out of the old pagan empire — the great red dragon, after so severe a conflict with Michael and his angels for the better part of three hundred years, being at last entirely routed and overthrown so that no place was found for him in heaven and he was cast down to the earth — did not give up his opposition to the woman, the church of Christ, over which the whole conflict had been fought. He remained in a rage and renewed his attacks, resorting to new tactics against the church. After being cast down from heaven to the earth, the serpent poured water like a flood from his mouth to sweep the woman away. The opposition Satan brought against the church before the rise of Antichrist took mainly two forms: corrupting the church with heresies, and new attempts to restore paganism.

(1) After the destruction of the pagan Roman empire, Satan infested the church with heresies. Though God had done such a glorious work in delivering the church from her pagan persecutors and overthrowing the pagan empire, the days of the church's travail were not yet over — the appointed time of her prosperity had not yet come, since that awaited the fall of Antichrist. So the peace and blessing the church enjoyed in Constantine's time was short-lived. It was a respite — a time of peace and quiet, as it were, for 'half an hour,' while the four angels held back the four winds until the servants of God could be sealed on their foreheads. But the church soon began to be gravely troubled by heresies. The two principal ones, which did the most harm, were the Arian and Pelagian heresies.

The Arians arose soon after Constantine came to the throne. They denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, claiming that they were merely created beings. This heresy grew and spread through the church like a flood threatening to overflow everything and sweep the church entirely away. Before the fourth century after Christ was finished, the majority of the Christian church had become Arian. Several emperors who were successors to Constantine held Arian views. With the Arians becoming the dominant party and holding civil authority on their side, they raised a great persecution against the true church of Christ. This heresy could rightly be compared to the flood the serpent poured from his mouth, threatening to drown everything and carry the woman away.

The Pelagian heresy arose at the beginning of the following century. It began with a man named Pelagius, who was born in Britain — his British name was Morgan. He denied original sin and

the work of the Spirit in conversion, and affirmed the power of free will, along with many other related errors. This heresy greatly troubled the church for a time. Pelagius's main opponent, who wrote in defense of orthodox doctrine, was Augustine.

(2) The other form of opposition Satan brought against the church was his efforts to restore paganism. His first attempt to restore it in the Roman empire was through Julian the Apostate. Julian was the nephew of Constantine the Great. When Constantine died, he left his empire to his three sons. When they had died, Julian the Apostate reigned in their place. He had been a professed Christian but fell away from the faith and turned to paganism — which is why he is called 'the apostate.' When he came to the throne, he did everything in his power to overthrow the Christian church and reestablish paganism in the empire. He removed the Christian officials and replaced them with pagans. He rebuilt the pagan temples and reinstated pagan worship in the empire, becoming a notorious persecutor of Christians — apparently going against his own better judgment. He habitually referred to Christ contemptuously as 'the Galilean.' He was killed by a spear wound during his wars with the Persians. When he saw that his wound was fatal, he took a handful of his own blood, threw it up toward heaven, and cried out, 'You have overcome, O Galilean.' He is commonly understood by theologians to have committed the unpardonable sin.

Another way Satan attempted to restore paganism in the Roman empire was through the invasions and conquests of pagan nations. During this period, the Goths and Vandals and other pagan barbarian nations living to the north of the Roman empire invaded, made great conquests, and eventually overran the empire.

In the fifth century they took the city of Rome itself, and finally conquered and took possession of what was called the Western empire — the western half — dividing it among themselves into ten kingdoms. This began the ten horns of the beast, for we are told that the ten horns are ten kings who would arise in the latter period of the Roman empire. These are also represented by the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. The invasion and conquests of these pagan nations are understood to be foretold in Revelation 8 in the events described under the sounding of the first four trumpets. These nations that took possession of the Western empire were pagans — and through them, paganism was for a time restored after it had been eradicated.

That covers Satan's opposition to the success of the Gospel during the period before the rise of Antichrist. I proceed:

2. To show what success the Gospel had during this period, despite this opposition.

(1) Satan's opposition in these things was defeated. Though the dragon poured out a great flood from his mouth after the woman to sweep her away, he could not accomplish his purpose — for the earth helped the woman, opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood the dragon had poured out. The heresies that for a while prevailed so greatly eventually faded, and sound doctrine was restored. And his attempt through Julian was ended at Julian's death.

(2) During this period, the Gospel was further spread among many pagan and barbarous nations on the borders of the Roman empire. In the time of Constantine, there was significant spread of the Gospel in the East Indies, chiefly through the ministry of a

man named Frumentius. Large numbers of the Iberians — a pagan people — were converted to Christianity through the godly example and witness of a Christian woman they had taken captive. There are accounts of several other barbarian peoples outside the Roman empire, large numbers of whom received the Gospel through the teaching and example of captives taken in war. Around AD 372, the Gospel was spread among the barbarian peoples of Arabia, and also among some northern nations. In particular, a ruler of the Goths became a Christian around this time, along with many of his people. Toward the end of that century, the Gospel was also spread further among the Persians and among the Scythians — the barbarian people the apostle mentions in Colossians 3:11: 'Barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman.'

Around AD 430, there was a remarkable conversion of a people called the Burgundians to the Christian faith. Around the same time, the Gospel began to be proclaimed in Ireland, and the Irish — who until then had been pagan — began to receive the Christian faith. Around the same period the Gospel was spread further among some barbarian peoples in Scotland, and in other places as well. In the following century, a pagan king named Zathus, who ruled over a people called the Colchians, was brought to renounce paganism and embrace Christianity. Several other barbarian nations are recorded as having renounced paganism and received Christianity around this time, more than I can mention here.

That briefly covers the main providential events relating to the success of the Gospel of Christ from Constantine to the rise of Antichrist.

Second, I come now to the second part of the time from Constantine to the destruction of Antichrist — the period from the rise of Antichrist to the Reformation through Luther and others. This was the darkest and most dreadful period the Christian church has ever known, and probably the darkest it will ever see. The time of the church's affliction and persecution — as noted earlier — runs from Christ's resurrection until the destruction of Antichrist, except where God mercifully shortens it through intermissions and seasons of relief for the sake of His elect. But the period from the rise of Antichrist until the Reformation was the time when the Christian church was at its deepest low and in its darkest hour. Throughout those many centuries the true church was in a state of great obscurity — like the woman in the wilderness — almost hidden from sight. In speaking of the events of this period I will: 1. take note of the great schemes and works of the devil against the kingdom of Christ during this time; 2. show how the church of Christ was sustained through it.

1. I will take note of the great works of the devil against the kingdom of Christ during this time. Satan had done great things against the Christian church before — but had been defeated again and again. Michael and his angels had won a glorious victory. How terrible had been the opposition under the pagan empire, and how glorious Christ's victory and triumph over Satan in the time of Constantine! Now God was pleased to prepare the way for an even more glorious victory over him — allowing Satan to rebuild his strength, to do the full extent of what his power and cunning could accomplish, to take a long time to lay his plans, establish his position, and consolidate his power. God allowed him to advance his schemes very far — almost to the point of swallowing up the

church — and to exercise a high, proud, and nearly unchecked dominion in the world for a long period before Christ finally conquers, subdues, and utterly destroys his visible kingdom on earth at the time of the destruction of Antichrist. In this way Christ triumphs gloriously over him after he has done his absolute worst — proving that Christ is above him even after Satan has acted with greatest arrogance and most highly exalted himself.

The two great works the devil accomplished during this period against the kingdom of Christ were the erection of his Antichristian kingdom and his Islamic kingdom — two kingdoms of vast extent and strength, which together swallowed up the ancient Roman empire: the Antichristian kingdom absorbing the Western empire, and the Islamic kingdom the Eastern empire. As the book of Revelation describes it, the glorious victory of Christ at the beginning of the church's glorious age will consist mainly in the destruction of these two kingdoms. Let us briefly consider how Satan established and maintained these two great kingdoms in opposition to the kingdom of Christ.

(1) Regarding the kingdom of Antichrist. This appears to be the greatest single scheme the devil ever devised against the kingdom of Christ, and Scripture clearly presents it as such. This is why Antichrist is called 'the man of sin' — or more precisely, 'that man of sin' in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The title is used emphatically, as though he were supremely and distinctively this. Similarly he is called 'the Antichrist' — meaning the opponent or adversary of Christ. This is not to say he is the only opponent of Christ — there were many others. The apostle John observes that in his own day there were already many antichrists. But this one is called 'the Antichrist,' as though there were no other, because he was so

supremely and above all others this. Correspondingly, this scheme of the devil is called 'the mystery of lawlessness' in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. No enemy of Christ receives anywhere near as much attention in the prophecies of Revelation as this one, and the destruction of no enemy is spoken of as bringing such great glory and joy to the church. The craft and cunning of the devil appear above all in this work of his — as could be shown at length, if time permitted.

This was a scheme of the devil to turn the ministry of the Christian church into a ministry of the devil — to transform the angels of the churches into fallen angels, and so into agents of darkness. Through the tyranny, superstition, idolatry, and persecution he set up, he contrived to create an image of ancient paganism — and more than restore what had been lost in the empire when paganism was overthrown in Constantine's time. By this means, the head of the beast that had received its deadly wound in Constantine now had that wound healed in Antichrist — Revelation 13:3. The dragon, who had formerly reigned in the pagan Roman empire and was cast out from it, now rises again through the beast with seven heads and ten horns coming up out of the sea, and gives him his power, his throne, and great authority — and all the world marvels and follows after the beast.

I am not attempting to determine precisely when the reign of Antichrist began — a point that has been long debated among theologians and commentators. What is certain is that the 1,260 days (or years) so frequently mentioned in Scripture as the duration of Antichrist's reign could not have begun before AD 479, because if they had, they would already have ended and Antichrist would already have fallen. But I will not attempt to determine exactly how long after this the period began. The rise of Antichrist was gradual.

The Christian church corrupted itself in many ways shortly after Constantine's time, growing more and more superstitious in its worship — gradually introducing more ceremonies into the worship of God, until at length they brought in the veneration of saints, set up images in their churches, and the clergy in general — especially the bishop of Rome — assumed more and more authority. In the earliest times the bishop of Rome was simply the pastor of a congregation, then a standing moderator of a presbytery, then a bishop over a diocese, then a metropolitan (equivalent to an archbishop), then a patriarch. After that he claimed authority as universal bishop over the whole Christian church throughout the world — opposed for a time, but then confirmed in that claim by imperial authority in AD 606. After that he claimed temporal princely authority as well, carrying two swords to signify that both the temporal and the spiritual sword belonged to him. His claimed authority grew continually until, as Christ's representative on earth, he claimed the very same power Christ would exercise if He were physically present and reigning on His throne — the same authority that belongs to God. He was commonly called 'God on earth,' and all the princes of Christendom were expected to submit to him. He claimed the power to crown princes and to depose them at will — and this power was recognized. It came to the point where kings and emperors kissed his feet. Emperors received their crowns at his hands, and princes feared the Pope's displeasure as they would fear a thunderbolt from heaven. If the Pope excommunicated a ruler, all his subjects were immediately released from their allegiance to him — indeed they were required not to recognize him any longer, on pain of excommunication themselves. And more than this, anyone might kill that ruler wherever he was

found. Furthermore, the Pope was believed to have the power to damn people at will — whoever died under his excommunication was regarded as certainly condemned to hell. Several emperors were in fact deposed, driven from their thrones, and died in misery through his means. If the people of any state or kingdom displeased him, he could place that territory under an interdict — a sentence pronounced by the Pope declaring that no sacred functions among them would have any validity. There could be no valid baptisms, sacraments, prayers, preaching, or pardons until the interdict was lifted. The people understood themselves to be in a miserable, damnable condition, and therefore feared it as they would fear fire and brimstone raining from heaven. In order to carry out his wrath on a prince or people who had displeased him, other princes also had to bear great trouble and expense.

Just as the Pope and his clergy stripped the people of their religious and civil liberties, so they also robbed them of their wealth — draining all of Christendom of its money and concentrating most of its riches into their own coffers through enormous revenues, plus payments for pardons and indulgences, baptisms and last rites, release from purgatory, and a hundred other things. Consider how well all this matches the prophecies: 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Daniel 7:20-21, Revelation 13:6-7, and Revelation 17:3-4.

During this time superstition and ignorance grew worse and worse. The Holy Scriptures were gradually taken from the hands of ordinary people — the better to advance the unscriptural and wicked agenda of the Pope and clergy. Rather than promoting knowledge among the people, they actively promoted ignorance. A common principle among them was that 'ignorance is the mother

of devotion.' The darkness of those times was so deep that learning nearly vanished from the world. Most of the priests themselves were grossly ignorant of anything worthy to be called learning — knowing little beyond their own oppressive craft of dominating and tyrannizing the souls of the people. The superstition and wickedness of the church of Rome kept getting worse and worse right up to the time of the Reformation. The entire Christian world was swept into this great apostasy — except for the remnants of the Christian church in the Eastern empire that had not been completely destroyed by the Turks (such as the Greek church and others), which were themselves sunk into great darkness and gross superstition. The exception also includes the small number of true believers represented by the woman in the wilderness and God's two witnesses — of which more later.

This is the first of the two great kingdoms the devil erected in this period in opposition to the kingdom of Christ — and it was the greatest and chief of the two. I come now to:

(2) The second of the two — the Islamic kingdom — which in many respects resembles the first. This was another great kingdom of mighty power and vast extent, established by Satan against the kingdom of Christ. Satan set it up in the Eastern empire, just as he set up the Antichristian kingdom in the Western.

Muhammad was born in Arabia in AD 570. When he was about forty years old, he began claiming to be the great prophet of God and started teaching the religion he had invented — in which he was to be worshiped as the supreme leader under God. He published his Quran, which he claimed to have received from the angel Gabriel. Being a cunning and clever man, possessing considerable wealth, and living among people who were deeply ignorant and

sharply divided in their religious views, he used shrewdness and attractive promises of a sensual paradise to gather followers. He established himself as their ruler, spread his religion by the sword, and declared that fighting for him was the path to paradise. By these means his movement grew, and his followers fought and conquered neighboring countries — gradually overrunning a large part of the world. First, around AD 700, the Saracens — followers of Muhammad from the Arabian region where he had lived — began savagely devastating the Roman empire. They overran a great many countries belonging to the empire and continued their conquests for a long time. These are understood to be the locusts described in Revelation 9.

After this, the Turks — originally a different people from the Saracens, but also followers of Muhammad — conquered the entire Eastern empire. They established their empire around AD 1296, began invading Europe around 1300, and took Constantinople in 1453 — making themselves masters of the entire Eastern empire, roughly three hundred years ago. With this, all those cities and regions where the famous early churches once existed — Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and the rest — came under Turkish rule. They also took possession of Constantinople — the city named after Constantine the Great, who had made it the capital of the Roman empire in place of Rome. These are understood to be prophesied by the horsemen described in Revelation 9, beginning at verse 15. The remaining Christians in those parts of the world — mostly of the Greek church — live in miserable slavery under the Turks, are treated with great barbarity and cruelty, and have for the most part become deeply ignorant and superstitious.

I have now shown the great works Satan accomplished during this period in opposition to the kingdom of Christ.

2. I now turn to show how the church of Christ was sustained through this dark time.

(1) It should be noted that in the earlier part of this period, some nations within Christendom held out for a long time before giving in to the corruptions and power grabs of the church of Rome. Though all the world marveled and followed after the beast, all nations did not fall in at once. Many of the principal corruptions of the church of Rome were introduced only after considerable struggle and opposition. When the Pope declared himself universal bishop, many churches strongly resisted him, and it was a long time before they would yield to his excessive claims. Similarly, when image worship was first introduced into the churches, many opposed it vigorously and resisted it for a long time. And so with the other corruptions of Rome. Those living closer to the city of Rome gave way sooner, but those in more distant regions took much longer to be brought under the yoke. Church history specifically records that much of the church in England, Scotland, and France preserved the ancient purity of doctrine and worship far longer than many others who were nearer the main seat of Antichrist.

(2) In every age of this dark period, individuals appeared throughout Christendom who bore witness against the corruptions and tyranny of the church of Rome. There is no era of Antichrist's dominion — even the very darkest — in which church historians do not name large numbers of people who expressed their abhorrence of the Pope and his idolatrous worship, and who pleaded for the ancient purity of doctrine and practice. God was pleased to main-

tain an unbroken succession of witnesses throughout the entire period — in Germany, France, Britain, and other countries. Historians document this, naming them and recording the testimony they held. Many of these were ordinary people, many were ministers, and some were magistrates and people of great prominence. In every age, numbers of them were persecuted and put to death for this witness.

(3) Besides these scattered individuals throughout Christendom, there was a people called the Waldenses — a distinct community that kept themselves separate from the surrounding world, maintained their purity of faith, and consistently bore witness against the church of Rome throughout this entire dark period. They lived in the Vaudois — the five valleys of Piedmont — a very mountainous region between Italy and France. Their homeland was surrounded by the exceptionally high mountains called the Alps, which were nearly impassable. The passes through this mountainous wilderness were so difficult that the valleys where this people lived were almost unreachable. There they lived for many ages in a state of separation from the rest of the world, having very little to do with any outside people. There they worshiped God in the ancient purity of His worship, and never submitted to the church of Rome. This place in the wilderness mountains was very likely the specific location described in Revelation 12:6 as the place prepared by God for the woman — where she would be nourished during the reign of Antichrist.

Some Roman Catholic writers themselves acknowledge that this people never submitted to the church of Rome. One such writer, speaking of the Waldenses, says that 'the heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest heresy in the world.' It is understood that

these people first retreated to this remote, hidden place among the mountains to escape the severity of the pagan persecutions before the time of Constantine the Great. So the woman fled into the wilderness from the face of the serpent, as Revelation 12:6 describes. And verse 14: 'But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.' Once settled there, their descendants continued in that place from generation to generation. Separated from the rest of the world both by the natural walls of the mountains and by God's grace, they never took part in the overwhelming corruption.

These in particular were those virgins who were not defiled while other women prostituted themselves — but who kept themselves pure for Christ alone. They followed the Lamb, their spiritual husband, wherever He went — following Him even into that harsh wilderness. Revelation 14:4-5. Their doctrine and worship, according to surviving records, are the same as Protestant doctrine and worship. Even Roman Catholic writers acknowledge that they were a people remarkable for the strictness of their lives, for charity, and for other Christian virtues. They lived in outward poverty in that harsh land, but they chose it rather than comply with the great corruptions of the surrounding world.

Living in so secluded a place, they went largely unnoticed by the Roman Church for a long time. But eventually they came under attention, and the Roman Church sent powerful armies against them, falling on them with insatiable cruelty — barbarously massacring and putting to death men, women, and children with every form of torture. They continued persecuting them with little inter-

ruption for several hundred years. By these means many were driven from their ancient home in the valleys of Piedmont and scattered throughout Europe, carrying their doctrine with them, and many were won over to it. So their persecutors, despite all their cruelty, could not extinguish the church of God — fulfilling His word that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

(4) Toward the latter part of this dark period, several notable theologians openly arose to defend the truth and bear witness against the corruptions of the church of Rome, and they gathered many followers. The first and most prominent of these was an English theologian named John Wycliffe, who appeared about 140 years before the Reformation. He vigorously opposed Roman religion, taught the same doctrine the Reformers would later teach, and had many followers in England. He was fiercely persecuted throughout his life, yet he died in peace. After he was buried, his persecutors dug up his bones and burned them. His followers continued in considerable numbers in England until the Reformation, suffering cruel persecution, with multitudes put to death for their faith.

Wycliffe had many disciples and followers not only in England but in other parts of Europe where his writings spread — particularly in Bohemia, where two prominent theologians arose: one named John Huss, the other named Jerome, a theologian from Prague, the chief city of Bohemia. Both strenuously opposed the church of Rome and had many who stood with them. Both were burned by the Roman Church for their doctrine. Their followers in Bohemia were cruelly persecuted but were never fully wiped out until the Reformation.

Having now passed through this dark period of the church — the second part of the time from Constantine to the destruction of Antichrist — I come now to:

Third, the third part — beginning with the Reformation and reaching to the present day. Here I will: 1. Speak of the Reformation itself; 2. The opposition the devil has made against the Reformed church; 3. What success the Gospel has recently had in various places; 4. What the current state of things is in the world with respect to the church of Christ and the success of His purchase.

1. The first thing to take note of here is the Reformation. This began about 220 years ago, first in Saxony in Germany, through the preaching of Martin Luther. Stirred in his spirit by the terrible practices of the Roman clergy, and having devoted himself diligently to searching out the truth through study of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the ancient church fathers, he openly and boldly denounced the corruptions and overreach of the Roman church in his preaching and writings. He quickly gathered a large number of followers, including the Elector of Saxony — the ruling prince of the territory where he lived. This alarmed the church of Rome greatly, and it seemed to rally all its forces to oppose him and his teaching, launching fierce wars and persecutions against it. Yet the work went forward through the labors of Luther and Melancthon in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, and other prominent theologians who were contemporary with Luther and aligned with him — especially Calvin, who appeared somewhat later in the Reformation but was one of its most eminent leaders.

Many of the German princes quickly embraced the Reformed faith, as did many other states and kingdoms in Europe — Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, much of France, Poland, Lithuania, Switzerland, and the Low Countries. At one point it was estimated that roughly half of Christendom held the Protestant faith — though since then the Roman Catholics have regained ground, and Protestants now make up a smaller proportion.

So God began gloriously to revive His church and advance the kingdom of His Son — after such a dreadful night of darkness as had covered the world from the rise of Antichrist until that time. There had been many efforts made by witnesses for the truth to bring about a reformation before. But now, when God's appointed time had come, His work began and moved forward with swift and wonderful progress. Antichrist — who had been rising higher and higher from his very beginning until this moment — was swiftly and suddenly brought down, falling halfway to complete ruin, and has never been able to return to his former height. A relatively recent commentator, Mr. Lowman, who has explained the first five bowls of Revelation 16 with perhaps greater probability than anyone before him, identifies the fifth bowl — poured out on the throne of the beast — with what took place at the Reformation, explaining the four preceding bowls as certain great judgments God brought upon Roman Catholic territories before the Reformation. Revelation 16:10 says: 'Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.' The bowl was poured on 'the throne of the beast' — that is, on the authority and dominion of the Pope.

The word 'throne' is often used in Scripture with this meaning, as in 1 Kings 1:37: 'As the Lord has been with my lord the king, so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David' — meaning, make his rule and authority greater, and his kingdom more glorious.

In the Reformation, God's wrath was poured out on the throne of the beast. His throne was terribly shaken and reduced. The Pope's authority and dominion were greatly diminished both in extent and in degree. He lost, as noted, about half his territories. Beyond that, since the Reformation the Pope has lost a great portion of even the authority he previously held within the territories that remained Roman Catholic. He is no longer heeded or feared as he once was. The powers of Europe have learned not to bow their necks under the Pope's feet as they once did. He is like a lion that has lost its teeth compared to what he once was.

When the Pope and his clergy — enraged to see their authority so diminished at the Reformation — gathered their heads together and united their forces to destroy the Reformation, their schemes, which had served them so well before, failed. They found their kingdom full of darkness and could accomplish nothing — like the Egyptians who did not rise from their seats for three days. The Reformed church was defended as Lot and the angels were in Sodom — by striking the attackers with blindness so that they could not find the door. God fulfilled then what is written in Job 5:11 and following: 'He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, so that their hands cannot attain success. He captures the wise by their own shrewdness, and the advice of the cunning is

quickly thwarted. They encounter darkness in the daytime, and grope at noon as in the night. But He saves from the sword of their mouth, and the poor from the hand of the mighty.'

Those proud enemies of God's people, finding themselves so thoroughly defeated and so unable to maintain their own dominion and authority, bit their tongues in fury and pain.

2. I now turn to show what opposition Satan and his agents have made against the success of Christ's purchase through the Reformation — noting along the way where they have been defeated and where they have had some success.

The opposition Satan has mounted against the Reformed faith has taken principally the following forms: 1. Through a general council of the church of Rome; 2. Through secret plots and schemes; 3. Through open wars and invasions; 4. Through cruel oppression and persecution; and 5. Through the introduction of corrupt doctrines.

(1) The first form of opposition I will note was the uniting of the Roman Catholic clergy in a general council. This was the famous Council of Trent, called by the Pope shortly after the Reformation began. At that council there gathered six cardinals, thirty-two archbishops, two hundred and twenty-eight bishops, and countless other clergy of the Roman church. This council, counting the periods between its sessions, continued over the course of twenty-five years. Its primary business throughout was to devise measures for establishing the church of Rome against the Reformers and for destroying the Reformation. But they proved unable to accomplish their purpose. The Reformed church, despite the council's size and length and its determination against it, sur-

vived — and still survives. So the schemes of the crafty were brought to nothing, their kingdom was filled with darkness, and they wore themselves out trying to find the door.

So the church of Rome — instead of repenting of its ways when Luther and the other servants of God set such clear light before them — by common consent in council persisted in its vile corruptions and wickedness and stubborn opposition to the kingdom of Christ. The doctrines and practices of the church of Rome that the Reformers most strongly condemned were confirmed by the council's decrees, and in many respects the corruptions were carried to a higher degree than ever before. They pronounced blasphemous curses and condemnations against the Reformed faith, and the entire Reformed church was excommunicated and anathematized by them — fulfilling the prophecy that 'they blasphemed God.' So God hardened their hearts, intending their destruction.

(2) The Roman Catholics repeatedly tried to overthrow the Reformation through secret plots and conspiracies. There were many plots against Luther's life. The Roman Catholics worked to eliminate him and remove him from their path, and Luther — being a very bold man — often put himself in great danger for Christ's cause. Yet they were remarkably prevented from harming him, and he died in his bed in peace. There have also been countless schemes secretly laid over the years for the overthrow of the Protestant faith. Among the most significant — and the one that seemed most likely to succeed — was the plot during the reign of King James II of England, which is within living memory for many of us. At that time there was a strong conspiracy between the King of England and Louis XIV of France — both Roman Catholics — to extinguish what they called the 'Northern heresy,' meaning the

Protestant religion, not only in England but throughout all of Europe. Their plans were so developed that success seemed nearly certain. They calculated that if the Reformed faith could be suppressed in Britain and the Netherlands — the strongest bulwark of the Protestant cause — the rest would be easy to deal with. But just when their plans seemed to be coming to fruition and ready for execution, God in His providence suddenly shattered all their schemes through the Revolution — with the coming of King William and Queen Mary. All their designs collapsed. The Protestant cause was strengthened even further when the crown of England was settled on the Protestant House of Hanover and a Roman Catholic was permanently barred by the nation's constitution from wearing the English crown. So they groped in darkness at midday as in the night; their hands could not carry out their plans; their kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues in pain.

After this, there was a deep scheme laid to bring about the same end in the later part of Queen Anne's reign, through the introduction of the Catholic pretender to the throne — which was no less suddenly and completely overturned by divine providence. Such plots to bring in the pretender and overthrow the Reformation have been foiled again and again.

(3) The Reformation has also repeatedly been opposed through open wars and invasions. At the beginning of the Reformation, the Holy Roman Emperor declared war against the Duke of Saxony and the leading men who supported and embraced Luther's teaching, in order to suppress the Reformation. But they could not achieve their goal — they could not suppress it. For the same purpose, the King of Spain maintained a long war against Holland and

the Low Countries in the century before last. But those brutal wars worked greatly to the disadvantage of the Roman Catholic cause, since they brought about the establishment of one of the most powerful Protestant states in Europe — which, next to Great Britain, stands as the chief defender of the Protestant faith. The Spanish invasion of England in Queen Elizabeth's time was likewise designed to suppress and exterminate the Reformed religion — their fleet carrying every instrument of cruelty they could find to torture Protestants who refused to renounce the Protestant faith. But their designs were completely foiled, and their great fleet was largely destroyed.

(4) Satan has also opposed the Reformation through cruel persecution. The persecutions inflicted on Protestants in country after country by the church of Rome have in many respects far exceeded the pagan persecutions before Constantine the Great, and surpassed all that had ever come before. So Antichrist proved the greatest and cruelest enemy the church of Christ has ever faced — in this as in all other ways — in fulfillment of the description given of the church of Rome in Revelation 17:6: 'And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.' And Revelation 18:24: 'And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.'

The pagan persecutions had been terrible. But under the church of Rome, persecution was refined, studied, and developed as an art and a science. Methods of torturing and tormenting were devised that go beyond the imagination of ordinary people or those who have not studied such things — beyond anything invented in all previous ages. To carry out persecution more efficiently, special

organizations were established throughout Roman Catholic territories — groups whose purpose was to study, develop, and practice persecution in its most effective form. These are the organizations known as the courts of inquisition. Reading the specific histories of Roman Catholic persecution and the courts of inquisition will give an idea that a few words cannot convey.

When the Reformation began, the beast with seven heads and ten horns raged in a dreadful manner. After the Reformation, the church of Rome renewed its persecution of the poor Waldenses, and great numbers of them were cruelly tortured and put to death. Shortly after the Reformation began, terrible persecutions broke out in various parts of Germany — especially in Bohemia, where they lasted for thirty years and so much blood was shed for religion that one writer compared it to the volume of water flowing through the great rivers of Germany. The countries of Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary were similarly flooded with Protestant blood.

Through these and other cruel persecutions, the Protestant faith was largely suppressed in Bohemia, the Palatinate, and Hungary — countries that had previously been predominantly Protestant. This fulfilled what had been foretold of the little horn in Daniel 7:20-21: 'and of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them.' And what was foretold concerning the beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 13:7: 'It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them,

and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.' Holland and the other Low Countries were also for many years a scene of nothing but the most appalling and terrifying cruelties — flooded with the blood of Protestants at the merciless hands of the Spaniards, to whom they were then subject. But in that persecution the devil largely failed in his purpose — for it ended in a large part of the Netherlands throwing off the Spanish yoke and establishing a wealthy and powerful Protestant state, which has since been a great defender of the Protestant cause.

France too has been a country where, since the Reformation, Protestants have suffered dreadful cruelties — perhaps more than any other country in some respects. After many cruelties had already been inflicted on Protestants in that kingdom, a major persecution began in 1571 during the reign of Charles IX of France. It opened with a cruel massacre in which 70,000 Protestants were slain in just a few days, as the king himself boasted. In the full course of this persecution he killed an estimated 300,000 martyrs. It has been reckoned that within thirty years around this time, 39 princes, 148 counts, 234 barons, 147,518 gentlemen, and 760,000 common people were martyred in France for the Protestant faith.

But all these persecutions were far surpassed in cruelty by those that followed under Louis XIV — considered by many to have exceeded all others that have ever occurred. Sustained over the entire length of his long reign, they nearly wiped out the Protestant faith from a kingdom that had previously been home to a multitude of flourishing Protestant churches throughout every part of it. Thus it was given to the beast to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

There was also a terrible persecution in England during the reign of Queen Mary, in which large numbers throughout the kingdom were burned alive. After this, although the Protestant faith was for the most part established by law in England, there were still very severe persecutions carried out by the high church party, which shared many characteristics with Roman Catholicism. It was such a persecution that drove our forefathers to flee their native country and come to settle in this land — which was then a wild and desolate wilderness. These persecutions continued with little relief until King William came to the throne.

Scotland too was for many years a scene of cruelty and bloodshed at the hands of the high church party — cruelties that came very close to those of Roman Catholic persecution in Queen Mary's days, and in many respects surpassed it. This continued until they were delivered under King William.

Ireland too has been overwhelmed, as it were, with Protestant blood. During the reign of King Charles I of England, more than 200,000 Protestants were cruelly murdered in that country in just a few days — the Roman Catholics, by secret agreement, rising simultaneously throughout the entire country at an appointed time, intending to kill every Protestant in the land at once.

Beyond these, there have been very cruel persecutions in Italy, Spain, and other places, which I will not take the time to describe here.

So the devil and his great instrument Antichrist raged with such violence and cruelty against the church of Christ! So did the whore of Babylon make herself drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus! And so, through these persecutions, the

Protestant church was greatly diminished! Yet with all of this they were not able to prevail — the Protestant church still stands, and Christ fulfills His promise that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church.'

(5) The last form of opposition Satan has made against the Reformation is through corrupt doctrines. Satan has opposed the light of the Gospel that shone forth in the Reformation by introducing and spreading many false teachings throughout the world.

The first opposition of this kind was the rise of the Anabaptist movement, which began about four or five years after the Reformation itself. This movement, as it first appeared in Germany, was far more extreme than the Anabaptists in England today. They held a great many thoroughly corrupt opinions. One of their doctrines was that there should be no civil authority — and therefore that rebellion against civil government was lawful. On this basis they refused to submit to magistrates or any civil laws, gathered together in large armed groups to resist their rulers, threw all of Germany into turmoil, and kept it in that state for some time.

The next opposition of this kind to the Reformation came through enthusiasts — those who falsely claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit as the prophets were. These arose in Germany about ten years after Luther began the Reformation, and various sects emerged among them that were extremely unstable and erratic. The Quakers in England and other parts of the British territories are among their spiritual descendants.

After these came the Socinians, who arose primarily in Poland through the teaching of two men: Laelius Socinus and Faustus Socinus. They held that Christ was merely a man, denied Christ's satisfaction for sin, and rejected most of the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Their heresy has since spread widely among Protestants in Poland, Germany, Holland, England, and elsewhere.

After these came the Arminians. They first appeared in Holland about 130 years ago and take their name from a Dutchman whose name was Jacobus van Harmin — which in its Latinized form is Jacobus Arminius. The entire movement takes its name from him. Arminius was first a minister in Amsterdam and then a professor of theology at the University of Leiden. He had many followers in Holland. A synod of all the Reformed churches was called together in response, meeting at Dort in Holland. The Synod of Dort condemned the Arminians — but they spread and gained ground anyway. Arminianism began to take hold in England during the reign of Charles I, especially within the Church of England. Before that time, virtually all Church of England theologians were Calvinists. Since then, Arminianism has gradually gained more and more ground until they have become almost universally Arminian. And not only that — Arminianism has greatly spread among the Dissenters as well, and has made significant inroads in New England as well as Old England.

Since then, Arianism has revived. As I mentioned earlier, Arianism shortly after Constantine's time nearly swallowed up the entire Christian world — like a flood from the mouth of the serpent threatening to engulf the woman. In recent years this heresy has been revived in England, where it now greatly prevails — both in

the Church of England and among Dissenters. Arians hold that Christ is merely a creature, though they grant He is the greatest of all creatures.

Another thing that has greatly prevailed among Protestants in recent times — especially in England — is Deism. Deists have entirely abandoned the Christian religion and are professed unbelievers. They are different from heretics like Arians and Socinians, who still acknowledge Scripture as the word of God and hold the Christian religion to be true — merely denying certain foundational doctrines. The Deists reject the whole Christian faith. They acknowledge the existence of God, but deny that Christ was the Son of God, calling Him a mere fraud. They say the same of all the prophets and apostles. They deny all of Scripture and hold that none of it is the word of God. They deny any revealed religion or any divine word whatsoever, claiming God has given humanity no guide but their own reason. These views and opinions have spread widely throughout our nation — which is the leading nation of the Reformation — and they continue to grow.

That covers the opposition Satan has made against the Reformation.

3. I now turn to show what success the Gospel has had more recently — its success in these later times of the Reformed church. This success can be grouped under three headings: 1. Reformation in doctrine and worship in countries called Christian; 2. Spread of the Gospel among the pagans; 3. Revival of religion in its power and practice.

(1) Regarding the first — reformation in doctrine — the most significant recent success of the Gospel in this category has been in the Russian empire, a country of enormous extent. The people of this country, those who called themselves Christians, professed to be of the Greek church but were miserably ignorant and deeply superstitious until recent times. The late Emperor Peter the Great — who reigned until about twenty years ago — set himself to reform the people of his empire and worked hard to bring them out of their darkness and to have them instructed in religion. To that end, he established schools of learning, ordered the Bible to be printed in the language of the country, made a law that every family should keep the Scriptures in their home, that every person should be able to read them, and that no one could be permitted to marry until they were able to read the Scriptures. He also reformed the churches of his country from many of their superstitions, so that the religion now professed and practiced in Russia is much closer to Protestant Christianity than it used to be. He gave strong encouragement to the practice of the Protestant faith in his territories. As a result, Russia has become a land of light compared to what it was before. Remarkable improvements in the state of religion have come about within the past fifty years.

(2) Regarding the second kind of recent success — the spread of the Gospel among the pagans — I want to note three things.

[1] The spread of the Gospel among the pagans in America. This American continent on which we live — a very large part of the world, which together with its neighboring seas takes up one entire side of the globe — was completely unknown to all Christian nations until modern times. It was not known that such a part of the world existed, even though it was densely populated. As a re-

sult, the devil had the peoples of this continent to himself, as it were — safely beyond the reach of the Gospel, and undisturbed in his dominion over them. The many nations of Native Americans worshiped him as God from age to age, while the Gospel was confined to the other side of the globe. There is a notion I have encountered somewhere — based on what appears to be some remaining evidence — that the peopling of America may have come about in this way: the devil, alarmed and disturbed by the wonderful success of the Gospel in the first three hundred years after Christ, and by the fall of the pagan empire under Constantine, and seeing the Gospel spreading so rapidly and fearing that his pagan kingdom would be completely overthrown throughout the world, led a people from the other continent into America so that they would be entirely out of the Gospel's reach — and here he could quietly hold them and reign over them as their god. Many writers have recorded that when the Europeans first arrived in America, some of the Native American nations had a tradition among them that their god had first led them into this continent and had gone before them in an ark.

Whether or not this was the case, it is certain that the devil quietly held his dominion over the poor nations of Native Americans for many ages. But in later times, God sent the Gospel into these parts of the world. Now the Christian church has been established in New England and other parts of America, where before there had been nothing but the deepest pagan darkness. A large part of America is now filled with Bibles and at least the outward form of worship of the true God and Jesus Christ — in places where the name of Christ had not been heard for many ages, if ever. Admittedly, the spread of the Gospel among the Native peoples

here has been small compared to what could be wished for. Yet there has been something worth noting. Something remarkable happened in the early days of New England, and more recently something remarkable has appeared here and in other parts of America — a growing desire among many Native peoples to be instructed in the Christian faith.

However small the spread of the Gospel among the Native peoples of America has been so far, I think we can rightly see the discovery of so vast a part of the world as America — and the bringing of the Gospel into it — as one way divine providence is preparing the way for the future glorious age of the church. In that day, Satan's kingdom will be overthrown not only throughout the Roman empire, but across the entire inhabited globe, on every continent. When those times come, the Gospel already brought to America will undoubtedly have glorious success, and all the inhabitants of this newly discovered world will become subjects of the kingdom of Christ, along with all the other ends of the earth. In all likelihood, providence arranged that the mariner's compass — a more recent invention that enables men to sail the widest oceans when before they dared not venture far from shore — would serve as preparation for what God intends to accomplish in the glorious age of the church: sending the Gospel to wherever any children of humanity dwell, however far away, and however separated by vast oceans from the parts of the world already reached by Christianity.

In recent years there has also been a significant spread of the Gospel among the pagans living within the Russian empire. I already noted the religious reforms that have taken place among those within that empire who call themselves Christians — but now I am speaking of the pagans. A large part of the vast Russian

territories is home to people who practice paganism. Much of Greater Tartary — a pagan land — has in recent times come under Russian rule, and large numbers of those pagan people have recently renounced their paganism and embraced the Christian faith.

There has also been a significant recent spread of the Christian faith among the pagans in the East Indies. In particular, many people in a region called Malabar in the East Indies have been brought to the Protestant Christian faith, primarily through the work of certain missionaries sent there by the King of Denmark to instruct them. These missionaries have brought many pagans to the Christian faith, established schools among them, and set up a printing press to print Bibles and other books for their instruction in their own language — all with great success.

The last kind of recent gospel success I want to note is the revivals of the power and practice of religion that have taken place in recent times. I will mention just two examples.

Not long ago, there was a remarkable revival of the power and practice of religion in Saxony, Germany, through the efforts of an outstanding pastor there named August Herman Franck — a professor of theology at Halle in Saxony. He was a person of extraordinary generosity, and the great work God accomplished through him began with a charitable initiative he launched. It started simply: he placed an alms box at his study door, into which people dropped small gifts, and the money was used to buy books for the instruction of the poor. God was pleased to bless his effort in a remarkable way, and to pour out such a spirit of generosity on the people of that place that through their giving he was able, in a short time, to build public schools for poor children and an orphanage to house and educate the needy. Eventually nearly five

hundred children were being maintained and taught in learning and faith through the charity of others — and the numbers kept growing for many years, up to the last reports I have seen. This was accompanied by a wonderful reformation and revival of religion and genuine piety in the city and university of Halle, and it continued to spread. It also had a powerful influence in many other places throughout Germany. Their example seemed to stir up many others to do the same.

Another thing we would be ungrateful not to acknowledge is the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God that has occurred recently in this part of New England — of which we in this town have received such a share. But there is no need for me to describe it in detail, since you have so recently witnessed it yourselves, and I trust that many of you have personally experienced its benefits.

With that, I have covered the more remarkable examples of the recent success of the Gospel in the world.

I now turn to the final matter proposed for consideration regarding the success of Christ's redemption during this period: the current state of the world with respect to the church of Christ and the success of His purchase. I will address this by comparing how things stand now to how they stood in the early days of the Reformation. First, I will show where things have changed for the worse. Second, I will show where they have changed for the better.

First, I will identify the ways in which things have changed for the worse since the beginning of the Reformation. There are three main areas.

The Reformed church has shrunk considerably. At the beginning of the Reformation, as noted earlier, Protestants were thought to make up roughly half of Christendom outside the Greek church — about as many Protestants as Roman Catholics. But that is no longer the case. The Protestant church has been greatly reduced. In earlier times there were vast numbers of Protestants in France, with many thriving Protestant churches spread throughout the country, meeting together in synods and maintaining strong discipline. A large portion of that kingdom was Protestant. The Protestant church of France was one of the great glories of the Reformation. But now it is entirely different: that church has been broken apart and scattered. The Protestant faith has been almost completely wiped out of France through the cruel persecutions carried out there, and now only a very small number of Protestant congregations remain in the entire country. The Protestant cause has also been greatly weakened in Germany. Several ruling princes who were Protestant have been succeeded by Roman Catholic rulers — particularly the Elector Palatine and the Elector of Saxony. The kingdom of Bohemia was once a Protestant kingdom but is now in Roman Catholic hands. Hungary was formerly a Protestant country as well, but the Protestants there have been greatly reduced and largely suppressed by the persecutions they endured. And in no significant way has the Protestant cause recently gained ground against Rome.

A second way things have gotten worse since the early days of the Reformation is the spread of loose and liberal views and opinions. There is nothing like the spirit of orthodoxy that once existed. There is very little visible zeal for the deep and spiritual doctrines of Christianity — and those doctrines have never been so mocked

and despised as they are in the present age, especially in England, the leading nation of the Reformation. In England, the foundational principles on which genuine godliness depends have been largely rejected, and Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and Deism are the views that now prevail and carry nearly everything before them. In particular, no age in recorded history has seen so great a departure from Christianity among people raised in the light of the Gospel. Never before has there been such a wholesale rejection of the Christian faith and all revealed religion. Never before has there been such widespread scoffing at and ridiculing of the Gospel of Christ by those brought up under Gospel light — nothing in history comes close to what we see today.

A third way things have gotten worse is that there is far less genuine godliness than there was at the beginning of the Reformation. There was a glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God accompanying the first Reformation — not only converting multitudes so quickly from Roman Catholicism to true religion, but turning many hearts to God in genuine faith. Religion flourished gloriously in one country after another, as was most powerfully demonstrated during those terrible times of persecution already described. But now there is an alarming decay of true, living faith. It is actually despised and dismissed as enthusiasm, fantasy, and fanaticism. Those who are genuinely religious are commonly regarded as unstable or out of their minds, while vice and irreverence spread like a flood threatening to sweep everything away. But I now turn to show,

Second, the ways in which things have changed for the better since the early Reformation.

The power and influence of the Pope has greatly diminished. Though he has gained some ground in territorial extent since the early Reformation, he has lost far more in the degree of influence he holds. The bowl that was poured out on the throne of the beast at the beginning of the Reformation — greatly reducing the Pope's power and authority in the world — has continued to take effect ever since. Shortly after the Reformation, the Pope began to be regarded with less deference by the princes of Europe than before, and that deference has continued to decline. Even many Roman Catholic rulers now appear to care very little for the Pope beyond what serves their own political purposes — and there have been several notable recent examples of this.

There is far less persecution now than there was in the early days of the Reformation. You have already heard how terribly persecution raged in those earlier times, and some of it continues today. Parts of the Protestant church are still under persecution at this very time, and likely will remain so until the church's season of suffering comes to an end — which will not happen until the fall of Antichrist. But it is nothing like what it once was. The spirit of active persecution no longer seems to prevail; it has even gone out of fashion among Roman Catholic rulers. The wickedness of Christ's enemies and their opposition to His cause seems to have taken a different form. The tendency now is to despise and mock all religion, with a general spirit of indifference toward it. Still, to whatever extent things are better now, there is at least far less outright persecution.

(3) There has been a great increase of learning. In the dark days of Roman Catholicism before the Reformation, learning had so far declined that the world seemed overrun with barbarous ig-

norance. Even many priests were grossly uneducated. Learning began to revive with the Reformation — driven in large part by the invention of the printing press, which appeared shortly before the Reformation. Since then, learning has continued to increase, and today it has undoubtedly reached a greater height than at any previous time in history. Though most educated people make poor use of it, the increase of learning is itself something to be welcomed — it is a genuine good and, rightly applied, an excellent servant of theology. It is a talent that, if God gives people the will to use it, provides a great advantage for doing significant things to advance the kingdom of Christ and the good of people's souls. That learning and knowledge would greatly increase before the glorious age of the church seems to be foretold in Daniel 12:4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." And however little learning is now being applied to the advancement of religion, we may hope that days are coming when God will make great use of it to advance the kingdom of Christ.

God in His providence now seems to be doing something similar to what He did just before Christ came. The age when Christ came into the world was an age of great learning — it had reached a higher point than ever before, and yet wickedness had never been more prevalent. God was pleased to allow human learning to reach such a height before He sent the Gospel into the world so that the world might see the utter insufficiency of their own wisdom for knowing God apart from the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of His Spirit. Then, after that, in God's wisdom, 'the world through its wisdom did not come to know God,' and it pleased God 'through the foolishness of the message preached to save those

who believe.' And when the Gospel first prevailed without the help of human learning, God then saw fit to make use of learning as a servant of the Gospel. So now learning has reached a great height — far beyond what it was in the age when Christ appeared. And to-day the world, with all its learning and wisdom, does not know God. People seem to wander in darkness, badly deceived, stumbling and falling in matters of religion as though it were pitch dark at midnight. Trusting in their learning, they grope in broad daylight as if it were night. Educated people are deeply divided in their religious opinions, running into all manner of corrupt views and harmful errors. They refuse to submit their reason to divine revelation or believe anything beyond their comprehension. And so, thinking themselves wise, they become fools — their thinking becomes futile, they exchange the truth of God for a lie, and their foolish hearts are darkened. See Romans 1:21 and following.

But when God has sufficiently shown humanity the insufficiency of human wisdom and learning for religious purposes — and when the appointed time comes for that glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God, when He Himself by His direct influence enlightens people's minds — then we may hope that God will use the great increase of learning as a servant of religion and as a means of gloriously advancing the kingdom of His Son. At that time, human learning will become a tool for understanding the Scriptures, for clearly explaining the doctrines of Christianity, and for defending them brilliantly. There is no doubt that God in His providence has in recent times given the world the printing press and such a great increase of learning as preparation for what He intends to accom-

plish for His church in the approaching day of its prosperity. In this way the wealth of the wicked is stored up for the righteous, as Proverbs 13:22 says.

Having now traced how the work of redemption has been carried on from the fall of humanity to the present day, before going further I want to make some application.

1. From what has been said, we can see strong evidence of the truth of the Christian religion and that the Scriptures are the word of God. There are three arguments for this that I will draw from what has been said.

(1) The first argument comes from the fierce and relentless opposition the wickedness of the world has always shown toward this religion. The religion professed by the church of God — from the founding of the church after the fall to the present time — has always been essentially the same. Though the outward forms have changed, the core religion the church has professed has always been the same in its essentials. The church of God has been one society from the beginning. The Christian church since Christ's ascension is clearly the same society continued from the church that existed before Christ came. The Christian church is grafted onto their root and is built on the same foundation. The revelation on which both have depended is essentially the same. The Christian church is built on the Holy Scriptures, and so was the Jewish church — though the Scriptures have now been enlarged by the addition of the New Testament. But this is still essentially the same revelation given in the Old Testament, with the New Testament revealing the subjects of divine revelation more clearly than the Old did. The sum and substance of both the Old Testament and the New is Christ and His redemption. The religion of the church of

Israel was essentially the same as the religion of the Christian church, as is clear from everything that has been said. The foundation of the religion of the church of God — both before and after Christ appeared — is the same great plan of redemption by the Son of God. The church before the Israelite church was likewise the same society, professing and practicing essentially the same religion. This was true from Noah to Abraham, and also before the flood. This society of people called the church has always been built on the foundation of those revelations we have in the Scriptures — revelations that have always been essentially the same, though gradually growing. The church before the flood was built on the revelations of Christ given to Adam, Abel, and Enoch, which we read about in the opening chapters of Genesis and related passages. The church after the flood was built on the revelations given to Noah and Abraham, to Melchizedek, Isaac, and Jacob, to Joseph, Job, and other godly men recorded in Scripture, along with other revelations of the same nature. After this, the church depended on the Scriptures themselves as they gradually grew. So the church of God has always been built on the foundation of divine revelation — always the same revelation in its essentials — which is fully contained in the Holy Scriptures and, ever since the time of Moses, has been grounded in the Scriptures themselves.

The opposition made against the church of God in every age has always been against the same religion and the same revelation. Therefore, the fierce and unrelenting opposition that human corruption and wickedness have always made against this church is a strong argument for the truth of this religion and this revelation — the very foundation on which the church has always been built.

Opposites can illuminate each other. We can rightly conclude that something is good by how strongly evil opposes it. We can rightly conclude that something is light by how intensely darkness hates it. From everything that has been said about the church of Christ and the holy religion it has professed, it is plain that the wickedness of the world has held a relentless hatred toward it and has mounted the most violent opposition against it.

No one can deny that the church of God has always faced fierce opposition in the world. This is clear from secular history as far back as it reaches, and before that, Scripture history gives us the same account. The church of God and its religion and worship began to be opposed in the time of Cain and Abel, and that opposition was present when the earth was filled with violence in Noah's time. After that, how the church was opposed in Egypt! How the church of Israel was always hated by the surrounding nations — as Jeremiah 12:9 expresses it: "My inheritance is like a speckled bird of prey; the birds of prey are against her all around." After the Babylonian captivity, how the church was persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes and others! How Christ was persecuted while He was on earth! How the apostles and other Christians were persecuted by the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans! How violent that people were against the church, and how fierce was the pagan world's opposition to the Christian church after that, before the time of Constantine! How intense was their hatred of true religion! And since then, how much more violent, spiteful, and cruel has the opposition of Antichrist been against the church!

There is no other example of opposition like this. History records no other group of people that has been so hated and so relentlessly and maliciously hunted and persecuted — nothing comes

close. No other religion has ever been so maligned age after age. People of other faiths have generally been allowed to practice their religion in peace and quiet, whatever their differences from their neighbors. One nation might worship one set of gods and another nation different gods, without those nations disturbing each other over it. All the hostility and opposition has been directed at the religion that the church of Christ has professed. All other religions have shown an unrelenting hatred toward this one, and from age to age people have seemed to harbor such a rage against it that they could never satisfy their cruelty. They stretched their imaginations to invent torments cruel enough — and even then were never satisfied. Their thirst for blood was never quenched.

So it is beyond dispute that this religion and these Scriptures have always been viciously opposed in the world. The only remaining question is: what has driven this opposition? Has it been the wickedness and corruption of the world? There can be no more doubt about this than about the opposition itself, if we consider how utterly without cause this cruelty has always been, who the opponents have been, and the manner in which they have opposed. The opposition has come chiefly from paganism and Roman Catholicism — both of which are clearly evil. Both are thoroughly evil, rooted in the blindness, corruption, and wickedness of humanity, as even the Deists themselves acknowledge. Natural reason shows that the religion of pagans — consisting in the worship of idols, sacrificing children to them, and practicing obscene and abominable rites — is wickedness. And the superstitions, idolatries, and overreach of the Roman church are no less contrary to the light of natural reason. From this it is clear that the opposition against the church of God has been made by wicked people. As for

the opposition of the Jews in Christ's and the apostles' time, it came during one of the most corrupt periods of that nation — when the people had become deeply wicked, as even some Jewish writers of that time, including Josephus and others, explicitly state. That pure wickedness has driven this opposition is evident from the nature of the opposition itself — the extreme violence, injustice, and cruelty with which the church of God has been treated. It seems to bear the mark of malignant spiritual forces behind it.

What other reason can possibly explain why the corruption and wickedness of the world would so relentlessly set itself against the religion of Jesus Christ and against the Scriptures — unless it is precisely because they stand against wickedness and are therefore good and holy? Why would the enemies of Christ, across thousands of years, display such a deadly hatred of this religion — unless it is the cause of God? If the Scriptures were not the word of God, and if the religion of the church of Christ were not the true religion, then it would follow that it is a thoroughly wicked religion — nothing but a collection of lies and abominable deceptions invented by the enemies of God themselves. If that were the case, it would be very unlikely that the enemies of God and the wickedness of the world would have maintained such relentless and implacable hostility toward it.

(2) A second great argument that the Christian church and its religion are from God is that the church has survived all the opposition and dangers it has faced throughout history. The church of God and the true religion — so relentlessly and violently opposed, with so many determined attempts to destroy it, so often brought to the very edge of ruin and nearly swallowed up — has nonetheless survived through most of six thousand years. This most pow-

erfully demonstrates the hand of God on behalf of the church. When you consider it, this stands as one of the greatest wonders and miracles that has ever occurred. Nothing else like it exists on the face of the earth. No other human society has endured as the church has. The old world before the flood was swept away by the deluge — yet the church of God was preserved. Satan's visible kingdom on earth was entirely overthrown at that time, but the visible kingdom of Christ has never been overthrown. All those ancient human kingdoms and empires we read about in history have long since come to an end. The kingdoms mentioned in the Old Testament — the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and others — have all been gone for ages. The four great world empires have been overthrown one after another. The great empire of Babylon was overthrown by the Persians; the Persian empire was overthrown by the Greeks; the Greek empire was overthrown by the Romans; and finally the Roman empire fell to various barbarian nations. This is a remarkable fulfillment of Scripture's words regarding earthly things, even the greatest and most glorious of them — they have all grown old and vanished away: "A moth will eat them like a garment, and a worm will eat them like wool" — yet God's church remains.

Never have there been so many determined and powerful attempts to destroy anything as there have been to destroy the church. Other kingdoms and human societies that appeared ten times as strong as the church of God have been destroyed by a fraction of the opposition the church has faced. This shows that it is God who has been the church's protector. It is plainly evident that the church has not sustained itself by its own strength. For the most part, it has been a very weak society. They have been a small

flock — so they were from ancient times. The children of Israel were but a small handful of people compared to the many who repeatedly sought their destruction. So it was in Christ's time, and at the beginning of the Christian church after His resurrection — they were only a remnant, while the entire Jewish nation was against them. So it was at the beginning of the Gentile church: they were a small number compared to the pagans who sought to destroy them. And so it was in the dark times of Antichrist before the Reformation — they were only a handful, yet their enemies could never overcome them. In most cases, the enemies of the church have not only had greater numbers on their side, but also greater power in other ways. The civil authorities have typically been on the side of the persecutors. So it was in Egypt: the civil authority sided with the Egyptians, and the church were merely their slaves, entirely in their power — and yet the Egyptians could not destroy them. So it was during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes: all the authority was on the persecutors' side and the church was under their rule — yet all their cruelty could not wipe it out. So it was afterward under the pagan Roman government. So it was under Julian the Apostate, who did everything in his power to destroy the Christian church and restore paganism. And so it has been for the most part since the rise of Antichrist: for many ages the civil authority was entirely on the side of Antichrist, and the church seemed to be completely in their hands.

Not only has the strength of the church's enemies exceeded the church's own strength, but in most cases the church has not even used the strength it had to defend itself — instead committing itself entirely to God. This was true during the Jewish persecutions before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and during the

pagan persecutions before Constantine. The Christians not only did not take up arms to defend themselves — they made no attempt at any kind of forcible resistance against their pagan persecutors. So it has been for the most part under Roman Catholic persecution as well — yet the enemies of the church have never been able to overthrow it. It stands to this very day.

This is all the more astounding when we consider how often the church has been brought to the brink of destruction — when the situation seemed hopeless, all hope seemed gone, and the church appeared to be swallowed up. In the time of the ancient world, when wickedness had so spread that only one family remained, God intervened in a wonderful way — sweeping away the wicked world with a flood and preserving His church. At the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his army were certain their prey was caught, God appeared, destroyed them, and delivered His church. The same pattern repeated again and again in the history of the church of Israel, as has been shown. During the tenth and final pagan persecution, the persecutors boasted that they had at last finished off the Christians and destroyed the Christian church — yet in the midst of their triumph, the Christian church rose out of the dust and prevailed, and the pagan empire utterly fell before it. When the Christian church seemed ready to be swallowed up by the Arian heresy — and again when Antichrist rose and prevailed and all the world marveled at the beast, and the church for many hundreds of years was reduced to a tiny remnant, seemingly hidden, with all the power of the world bent on destroying those last traces of the church — still the enemies could never fully accomplish their aim. At last God wonderfully revived His church in the time of the Reformation, making it stand on its feet as it were in

full view of its enemies and lifting it out of their reach. So again, when the Roman Catholic powers plotted the overthrow of the Reformed church and seemed on the verge of completing their plan, God intervened in a remarkable way for the deliverance of His church — as happened through the Revolution with King William. This has been the pattern again and again: after the darkest moments in the church's history, God has caused His church to flourish most gloriously.

If such a preservation of the church of God — from the beginning of the world to the present, under such extraordinary circumstances — is not sufficient to demonstrate a divine hand working on its behalf, what evidence could ever be sufficient? And if this preservation is indeed from God's hand, then God owns the church, owns its religion, and owns the revelation and the Scriptures on which it is built. It follows, then, that their religion is the true religion — God's own religion — and that the Scriptures, which they follow as their rule, are His word.

(3) A further argument for the divine authority of the Scriptures can be drawn from what has been said: that God has so thoroughly fulfilled what the Scriptures foretold. I have already noted along the way how various prophecies of Scripture were fulfilled. I will now single out just two examples of fulfilled prophecy.

(1) The first is God's preservation of His church from ruin. I have just shown what evidence this is of the divine authority of the Scriptures when considered in itself. I now speak of it as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. This preservation is abundantly foretold and promised in Scripture — particularly in the passage under discussion, where it is foretold that other things will fall, that other kingdoms and empires that set themselves in opposition will come

to nothing: "A moth will eat them like a garment, and a worm will eat them like wool." And that is exactly what has happened. But Scripture also foretells that God's covenant love for His church will continue forever — and so it has proven, through so many ages and so many dangers. The same is promised in Isaiah 54:17: "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn." And again in Isaiah 49:14-16: "But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." The same promise appears again in Isaiah 59:21, Isaiah 43:1-2, and Zechariah 12:2-3. Christ makes the same promise when He says: "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Now if this is not from God, if the Scriptures are not the word of God, and if the church of Christ built on the foundation of this word is not of God — how could those who made these predictions have known they would come true? If the church were not of God, its survival would have been extremely unlikely. The prophets foretold the great opposition and the great dangers; they foretold that other kingdoms would come to nothing and that the church would often seem almost completely overwhelmed — as could easily be shown — and yet they also foretold that the church would remain. How could they have foreseen something so unlikely without divine inspiration?

(2) The second remarkable instance of fulfilled prophecy I will mention concerns Antichrist — a great and specific opponent of Christ and His kingdom foretold in Scripture. Scripture foretold

how this Antichrist would arise: not from among pagans or nations that never professed Christianity, but through the apostasy and falling away of the Christian church into a corrupt state. This is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: "For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." Scripture also prophesied that this Antichrist — this man of lawlessness — would establish himself within the visible church of God, claiming to hold the authority of God Himself as head of the church, as verse 4 of that same chapter states. All of this was precisely fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture also indicated that the rise of Antichrist would be gradual, as verse 7 says: "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." This too came to pass. Scripture also prophesied that this great enemy of the Christian church would be a great prince or ruler within the Roman empire — represented as a horn of the fourth beast in Daniel, which the angel himself explains is the fourth kingdom or empire on earth, as seen in the account of the little horn in Daniel chapter 7. This also came to pass. Scripture also prophesied that the seat of this great ruler — this self-proclaimed representative of God and head of His church — would be in the city of Rome itself. In Revelation 17, the spiritual prostitute, or false church, is said to sit on seven mountains or hills. Revelation 17:9 says: "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits" — and the final verse of that chapter states explicitly, "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth" — which was unmistakably the city of Rome at that time. This prophecy also was fulfilled in the church of Rome.

Scripture also foretold that this Antichrist would reign over peoples and multitudes and nations and languages (Revelation 17:15), and that all the world would marvel at the beast (Revelation 13:3). This too was fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that this Antichrist would be marked by extreme pride, claiming great things for himself: 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says he would exalt himself above everything called God or that is worshiped. Revelation 13:5 says: "There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies." In Daniel 7:20, the little horn is said to have a mouth speaking very great things, and his appearance was more imposing than his companions. This also was fulfilled in the Pope and the church of Rome. Scripture also prophesied that Antichrist would be a severe and cruel persecutor. Daniel 7:21 says the same horn made war with the saints and overpowered them. Revelation 13:7 says: "It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." Revelation 17:6 says: "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." This too was fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would excel in cunning and scheming. Daniel 7:8 says: "In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man." Verse 20 similarly says: "even that horn which had eyes." This too was fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that the kings of Christendom would submit to Antichrist. Revelation 17:12-13 says: "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast." This also was fulfilled regarding the Roman church. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would perform false miracles and deceptive

wonders. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says: "his coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders." Revelation 13:13-14 says: "He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast." This too was fulfilled in the church of Rome. The fire coming down from heaven appears to refer to their excommunications, which were feared like fire from heaven. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would forbid marriage and command abstaining from certain foods. 1 Timothy 4:3 says: "men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." This also was precisely fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would be extremely wealthy and attain great earthly splendor and glory. Revelation 17:4 says: "The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup." See also Revelation 18:7, 12-13, 16. This too was fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would forbid buying and selling to any who did not bear his mark. Revelation 13:17 says: "no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name." This also was fulfilled in the church of Rome. Scripture foretold that Antichrist would traffic in the souls of men. Revelation 18:13, in listing the articles of his merchandise, includes the souls of men as one of them. This too was precisely fulfilled in that same church. Scripture also foretold that Antichrist would not permit the bodies of God's people to be buried. Revelation 11:8-9 says: "And their

dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city — and those — will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb." This also was literally fulfilled in the church of Rome. I could mention many other things foretold about Antichrist — that great enemy of the church spoken of so often in Scripture — and show how they were all fulfilled with remarkable precision in the Pope and the church of Rome.

How powerful an argument this is that the Scriptures are the word of God!

2. A second conclusion we can draw from what has been said is this: it teaches us what the spirit of true Christians is — a spirit willing to suffer. Since God has so ordered things in His providence that His church should be in a suffering condition for so long — indeed, for the greater part of so many ages, often suffering extremely — we can conclude that the spirit of the true church is a spirit willing to endure suffering. Otherwise God would never have arranged so much suffering for the church. Doubtless God shapes the circumstances of the church to match the spirit He has given her. From what has been said, we see how many and how great the sufferings of the Christian church have been throughout most of these 1,700 years. No wonder, then, that Christ so repeatedly impressed on His disciples that if anyone would follow Him, 'he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'

We can see further that the spirit of the true church of Christ is a suffering spirit by looking at how the church has actually responded under persecution. Under those terrible persecutions through which she has passed, the church consistently chose to endure dreadful torments — to give up everything for the pearl of great price, to suffer all that her bitterest enemies could inflict —

rather than renounce Christ and His religion. History provides us with a great number of remarkable examples and sets before us a great cloud of witnesses. This powerfully confirms that we must be people willing to give everything up for Christ — to surrender our own comfort, our worldly profit and reputation, and our all, for Him and for the Gospel.

Let us ask ourselves: are we of such a spirit? How does it prove when tested? Do our lives demonstrate that we are willing to deny ourselves, give up our worldly interests, and pass through the trials God's providence calls us to? How small our trials are compared to those of many fellow Christians in earlier ages! On this point I apply the words of Jeremiah 12:5: "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses?" If you have been unable to endure the light trials to which you have been called in this age and in this land, how would you endure the far greater trials the church has been called to in earlier ages? Every true Christian carries the spirit of a martyr and would suffer as a martyr if God's providence called them to it.

3. From what has been said, we have strong reason to confidently expect the fulfillment of everything that Scripture has foretold but has not yet come to pass. Scripture foretells many great things still to be fulfilled before the end of the world. These can seem to face great obstacles, and we can seem very far at present from the state Scripture foretells. But we have every reason to expect that these things — however seemingly difficult — will yet be accomplished in their appointed time. We see how faithfully God has kept His promises up to this point. How true God has been to His church, remembering His mercy from generation to generation! We can say of what God has done for His church so far what

Joshua said to the children of Israel in Joshua 23:14: "Not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed." Everything has come to pass in accordance with God's word. This should strengthen our faith in His promises, encourage us, and stir us to earnest prayer for the accomplishment of the great and glorious things that still remain to be fulfilled.

It has already been shown how the success of Christ's redemption was carried on through various periods down to the present time.

Fourth, I now turn to show how the success of Christ's redemption will be carried forward from the present time until Antichrist falls and Satan's visible kingdom on earth is destroyed. For this period of time, we have nothing to guide us but the prophecies of Scripture. For most of the time from the fall of humanity to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, we had Scripture history to guide us. From that point to the present, we had prophecy together with its fulfillment in God's providence, as recorded in human history. But from here forward, we have only prophecy to guide us. I will pass over things that are merely speculative or inferred from uncertain interpretations and focus only on what is more clear and evident.

We do not know what specific events will occur before that glorious work of God's Spirit begins — the work through which Satan's kingdom is to be overthrown. Most theologians agree that few things, if any, are foretold to occur before the beginning of that glorious work of God. Some believe that the killing of the witnesses described in Revelation 11:7-8 has not yet taken place. Theologians also disagree about the seven bowls in Revelation 16 — how many have already been poured out and how many remain. However, a

recent commentator I have mentioned before appears to make it quite plain that all but two have already been poured out: the sixth on the great river Euphrates, and the seventh into the air. I will not here examine in detail what the pouring out of the sixth bowl on the river Euphrates means — the preparation of the way for the kings of the east — except to say that it appears to be something that directly prepares the way for the destruction of spiritual Babylon, just as the drying up of the literal river Euphrates that ran through ancient Babylon prepared the way for the kings of the Medes and Persians — the kings of the east — to enter under the city walls and destroy it.

Whatever this refers to, it does not appear to be something that will be accomplished before the work of God's Spirit begins — the work by which, as it advances, Satan's visible kingdom on earth will be completely overthrown. Therefore I will proceed directly to consider what Scripture reveals about God's own work by which He will bring about this great event, since this is the next certain thing the prophecies of Scripture point us toward.

First, I want to note two things about it in general.

1. From Scripture we have reason to conclude that just before this work of God begins, the state of religion in the world will be very dark. This has been the pattern before every great revival of religion up to this point. It was so when Christ came — it was a deeply corrupt time among the Jews — and it was also a very dark time just before the Reformation. Beyond this, Scripture seems to foretell that when Christ comes to establish His kingdom in the world, it will be a time of very little true faith. This is implied in Luke 18:8, where Christ, speaking about His coming to encourage His elect who cry out to Him day and night, adds: "However, when

the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" This suggests that unbelief will be widespread just before Christ's coming to avenge His suffering church. While Christ's coming at the final judgment is not excluded from this passage, it seems to have particular reference to His coming to deliver His church from their long state of suffering and persecution — which is fully accomplished only at His coming to destroy Antichrist. That is the time when the cry of the elect in Revelation 6:10 — "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" — will be answered, and when the rejoicing of Revelation 18:20 will be fulfilled: "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

It is already a very dark time for the state of religion — the very kind of time prophesied in that passage, when there is little faith and unbelief widely prevails on earth. We see a remarkable fulfillment of 2 Peter 3:3: "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts." And of Jude 17-18: "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.'" Whether things will grow even darker before this glorious work of God begins — and how much darker — we cannot say.

2. There is no reason from God's word to expect anything other than that this great work of God will unfold gradually, even if very swiftly. Just as the children of Israel returned from Babylonian captivity gradually — one group at a time — and gradually rebuilt their city and temple; and just as the pagan Roman empire was

brought down by a gradual, though swift, spread of the Gospel — so too, though many things suggest that God's work will be extremely rapid and that great and wonderful events will occur with sudden force, and though some parts of Satan's visible kingdom will fall very suddenly, it will not all be accomplished at once by some great miracle the way the resurrection of the dead will occur instantly at the end of the world. Instead, this is a work that will be accomplished through ordinary means — through the preaching of the Gospel and the regular means of grace — and so it will come about gradually. Some will be converted and will become instruments in converting others. God will first pour out His Spirit to raise up instruments, and then those instruments will be used and blessed. No doubt one nation will be enlightened and converted after another, one false religion and false form of worship overthrown after another. In Daniel 2, the stone cut from the mountain without human hands gradually grows. Christ teaches us similarly: the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), and like yeast hidden in three measures of flour (verse 33). The same picture appears in Mark 4:26-28 and in the vision of the water flowing from the sanctuary in Ezekiel 47. Scripture suggests there will be several successive great and glorious events through which this glorious work will be accomplished. The angel speaking to the prophet Daniel about those glorious times mentions two distinct glorious periods, at the end of each of which something glorious would be accomplished. Daniel 12:11: "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." Then the following verse adds: "How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335

days" — suggesting that something very glorious would be accomplished at the end of the first period, but something far more glorious at the end of the second.

I now proceed to show how this glorious work will be accomplished.

1. The Spirit of God will be poured out gloriously for a wonderful revival and spread of true religion. This great work will be accomplished not by the authority of rulers, nor by the wisdom of learned people, but by God's Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6-7: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" The prophet Ezekiel, speaking of this great work of God, says in chapter 39:29: "I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord God." We do not know where this outpouring of the Spirit will begin, or whether it will begin in many places at once, or whether what has already occurred may be a forerunner and beginning of it.

When this outpouring of the Spirit begins, it will quickly bring great multitudes to turn away from the vice and wickedness that now so generally prevails, and it will cause the genuine faith that is now so despised and mocked in the world to revive. The work of conversion will break out and spread in a way never seen before — in keeping with what Isaiah 44:3-5 describes. God, by pouring out His Holy Spirit, will equip people to be powerful instruments in carrying on this work, filling them with knowledge and wisdom and burning zeal for the advance of Christ's kingdom, the salvation of souls, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. As a

result, the Gospel will begin to be preached with far greater clarity and power than ever before. This great work of God will be accomplished through preaching, as Revelation 14:6-8 portrays: before Babylon falls, the Gospel will be powerfully preached and spread throughout the world.

This was foreshadowed in ancient Israel by the sounding of the silver trumpets at the beginning of the Year of Jubilee. Leviticus 25:9: "You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land." The glorious times that are approaching are in a sense the church's jubilee, which will be announced by the sounding of the silver trumpet of the Gospel — as foretold in Isaiah 27:13: "It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem." There will be a glorious outpouring of the Spirit accompanying this clear and powerful preaching of the Gospel. It will make the preaching effective in reviving those central doctrines of Christianity that are now mostly ridiculed in the world, in turning many away from heresy, from Roman Catholicism, and from other false religions, and also in turning many away from vice and irreverence — bringing vast multitudes savingly to Christ.

That work of conversion will advance in a wonderful way and spread more and more. Many will stream together to the goodness of the Lord, coming in crowds — one multitude after another flowing in continually — as Isaiah 60:4-5 describes: "Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried

in the arms." "Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice." And so verse 8: "Who are these who fly like a cloud and like the doves to their lattices?" Since Revelation foretells that the Gospel will be preached to every tribe, tongue, nation, and people before the fall of Antichrist, we may expect that it will soon bear glorious fruit, bringing in multitudes from every nation. It will spread with wonderful speed, and vast numbers will be brought in almost at once — as Isaiah 66:7-9 describes.

2. This outpouring of the Spirit of God will not bring about the overthrow of Satan's visible kingdom without first provoking a violent and fierce opposition. Scripture makes this plain: when Christ comes in this glorious way and the destruction of Antichrist draws near, and Satan's kingdom begins to totter and appears on the verge of collapse, the powers of the kingdom of darkness will rise up and fight with all their might to prevent it from being overthrown. After the pouring out of the sixth bowl — which was to dry up the river Euphrates and prepare the way for the destruction of spiritual Babylon — Revelation 16 depicts the powers of hell becoming greatly alarmed and rousing themselves to oppose the kingdom of Christ, before the seventh and final bowl is poured out to deliver them their complete and final defeat. The sixth bowl is poured out in verse 12. After this, the apostle John tells us in the following verses that "three unclean spirits like frogs" go out to the kings of the whole earth to gather them for "the battle on the great day of God, the Almighty." This appears to be Satan's final and greatest effort to save his kingdom from destruction — though he may make an equally great effort at the very end of the world to try to recover it.

When the Spirit begins to be poured out so gloriously, and the devil sees multitudes streaming to Christ in one nation after another — the foundations of his kingdom undermined daily, its pillars cracking, the whole structure on the verge of swift collapse — all of hell will be thrown into alarm. Satan has always dreaded the overthrow of his kingdom. He has been working against it ever since Christ's ascension, and has done great things to fortify and preserve it since the days of Constantine the Great. To this end he established those two mighty kingdoms of Antichrist and Muhammad, and has introduced all the heresies, superstitions, and corrupt opinions that fill the world. But when he sees everything beginning to fail, it will rouse him intensely. If Satan dreaded being driven out of the Roman empire, how much more will he dread being driven out of the entire world!

It appears that in this final great opposition made against the church in defense of Satan's kingdom, all the forces of Antichrist, Islam, and paganism will be united — indeed all the forces of Satan's visible kingdom from across the entire world. This is why it is said that "the spirits of demons" will go out to "the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." These spirits are said to come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet — meaning the spirit of Roman Catholicism, the spirit of Islam, and the spirit of paganism will all be united. By the beast is meant Antichrist; in Revelation, the dragon typically refers to the devil as he reigns over his pagan kingdom; and the false prophet sometimes refers to the Pope and his clergy — but here the reference appears to be to Muhammad,

whom his followers call a great prophet of God. This will be the death throes of the ancient serpent — a battle in which he will fight like one who is nearly desperate.

We do not know the specific form this opposition will take. It is described in Scripture as a battle — called the battle of the great day of God Almighty. There will be in some form a mighty struggle between Satan's kingdom and the church, likely involving every possible form of opposition. There will certainly be great opposition by external force, as the princes of the world who are on the devil's side will join forces together — as Revelation 19:19 says: "the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war." There will also likely be fierce opposition through clever argumentation and human reasoning, great persecution in many places, vicious attacks of slander, and cunning scheming. The devil will press both his intelligence and his strength to the absolute limit. Demons and those in their kingdom will be stirred up everywhere to mount a united and violent opposition against the holy religion they see advancing so powerfully in the world. But,

3. Christ and His church will win a complete and total victory in this battle. Their enemies will be utterly routed and overthrown in this final effort. When the powers of hell and earth are gathered against Christ, and His armies come forth against them by His word and Spirit to fight — how magnificent and glorious is the description of this coming forth of Christ and His church to battle in Revelation 19:11 and following! To convey the greatness of the victory and the completeness of the overthrow of their enemies, verses 17-18 describe all the birds of heaven called together to eat

the great supper — the flesh of kings, captains, and mighty men. Then in the following verses the victory and overthrow are described.

In this victory the seventh bowl will be poured out. Revelation 16:16 speaks of the great army gathered against Christ: "And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon." Then: "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, 'It is done.'" And now it is done for Satan and his followers. When this victory is won, everything is in effect accomplished. Satan's final and greatest opposition is crushed. All his plans are ruined. The pillars of his kingdom are shattered, and the whole structure collapses. The devil is completely defeated and at a total loss for what to do. He watches his Antichristian, Islamic, and pagan kingdoms throughout the world come crashing down around him. He and his most powerful instruments are taken captive. Now what the church of God had long waited and hoped for — what they had so earnestly cried out to God for, saying "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" — has finally come.

The angel who stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth lifted his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever — who created heaven and everything in it, and the earth and everything in it, and the sea and everything in it — that when the seventh angel sounded, there would be no more delay. Now that time has come. Now the seventh trumpet sounds and the seventh bowl is poured out together — signifying that everything is finished regarding the overthrow of Satan's visible kingdom on earth. This victory will be by far the greatest ever won over Satan and his followers. By this blow, the stone cut from the

mountain without human hands strikes the image of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay and shatters it all to pieces. It is the finishing blow to the image, which becomes like the chaff on a summer threshing floor.

In this victory there will be a most glorious display of divine power. Christ will appear in the character of King of kings and Lord of lords, as in Revelation 19:16. He will shatter His enemies — even the strongest and proudest of them — like a potter's vessel broken into fragments. Strength will come through weakness, and Christ will cause His church to thresh the mountains, as in Isaiah 41:15: "Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; you will thresh the mountains and pulverize them, and will make the hills like chaff." Then the promise of Isaiah 42:13-15 will be fulfilled.

4. Following this victory, Satan's visible kingdom on earth will be destroyed. Once Satan is defeated in this final battle, the church of Christ will find the remaining work straightforward — like how Joshua and the children of Israel, after winning that great victory over the five kings of the Amorites when the sun stood still and God sent great hailstones on their enemies, went from city to city burning them with fire, easily subduing all the cities and territory those kings had ruled. So it was also after the other great battle Joshua fought against the large coalition at the waters of Merom. In the same way, after this glorious victory of Christ and His church over their enemies and over the chief powers of Satan's kingdom, they will destroy that kingdom and all its cities and territories. After this the word of God will advance through the earth with swift and irresistible progress — for when the seventh bowl is poured out, Revelation 16:19-20 says the cities of the nations fell,

every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. Once the stone cut from the mountain without human hands has shattered the image to pieces, the remaining traces of it are easily swept away. The wind will carry it off like chaff from a summer threshing floor. Because Satan's visible kingdom on earth will be destroyed by this seventh bowl, it is said to be poured out into the air — which Scripture identifies as the special seat of his dominion, since he is called "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians 2:2. Now comes the time of punishing Leviathan, the piercing serpent, spoken of in Isaiah 27:1: "In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea."

Regarding this overthrow of Satan's visible kingdom on earth, I will: (1) describe what this overthrow will mainly consist of, and (2) describe the scope and extent of it.

1. I will describe what this overthrow of Satan's kingdom will chiefly consist of. I will list the specific elements it will include, without claiming to determine in what order they will occur, which will happen first, or whether they will be accomplished together.

(1) Heresy, unbelief, and superstition among those raised under the light of the Gospel will be abolished. Socinianism, Arianism, Quakerism, and Arminianism will come to an end. Deism — now so bold and aggressive in its unbelief — will be crushed, driven away, and will vanish to nothing. All will agree on the same great and central doctrines of the Gospel, in keeping with Zechariah 14:9: "And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one." All false forms of worship will also be abolished, and all will agree

in worshiping God in His own appointed ways, as Jeremiah 32:39 promises: "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them."

(2) The kingdom of Antichrist will be completely overthrown. His power and dominion has already been greatly reduced by the bowl poured out on his throne at the Reformation — but then it will be utterly destroyed. The proclamation will go forth: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." When the seventh angel sounds, the time, times, and half a time will be completed, and there will be no more delay. Then the things written in Revelation 18 about spiritual Babylon — that great city of Rome, the idolatrous Roman power that has for so many ages been the great enemy of the Christian church, first under paganism and then under the Pope — will be accomplished. That proud city that lifted herself up to heaven and above God Himself in her pride and arrogance, that cruel and bloodthirsty city, will be brought down to the ground. Isaiah 26:5 will then be fulfilled: "For He has brought low those who dwell on high, the unassailable city; He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He casts it to the dust." She will be thrown down with violence, like a great millstone hurled into the sea — never to be found again — and will become a dwelling place of demons, a prison of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every unclean and detestable bird. She will be stripped of all her glory, riches, and adornments, cast out like a rotting branch, and trampled down like mud in the streets. All her cunning and craftiness, in which she so abounded, will not save her. God will cause His people — who have been so long persecuted by her — to place their foot on the neck of Antichrist, making him their footstool. All the

power and cleverness of that great prostitute will fail her, and there will be no one to help her. The kings of the earth, who previously gave their power and strength to the beast, will now turn against the prostitute — making her desolate and naked, devouring her flesh, and burning her with fire (Revelation 17:16).

(3) The other great kingdom Satan has raised up against the Christian church — his Islamic kingdom — will be completely overthrown. The locusts and horsemen in Revelation 9 have their appointed and limited time, and the false prophet will be seized and destroyed. Though Islam has spread so vastly throughout the world and is sustained by a great empire, this smoke that rose from the bottomless pit will be utterly dispersed before the light of that glorious day, and the Islamic empire will fall at the sound of the great trumpet that will then be blown.

(4) Jewish unbelief will also be overthrown at that time. Although the Jewish people have been stubbornly rejecting Christ for more than seventeen hundred years, and examples of conversion among them have been extremely rare since the destruction of Jerusalem — and though they have continued, against the plain teaching of their own prophets, to approve of their ancestors' act of crucifying Christ — when that day comes, the thick veil that blinds their eyes will be removed (2 Corinthians 3:16). Divine grace will melt and transform their hardened hearts: "They will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10 and following). Then the house of Israel will be saved. The Jewish people across all their communities will cast off their long-held unbelief, have their hearts wonderfully changed, and be ashamed of their

past rejection and stubbornness. They will stream together to the blessed Jesus — with penitence, humility, and joy — owning Him as their glorious King and only Savior, and with all their hearts and with one voice declaring His praise to other nations.

Nothing is more clearly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews, as described in Romans 11. There are also many Old Testament passages that can only be interpreted in this sense, which I cannot take the time to mention here. Beyond the prophecies of the calling of the Jews, there is a remarkable confirmation in God's providence — something like a continual miracle: the Jewish people have been preserved as a distinct nation even in their scattered condition for more than sixteen hundred years. Nothing else like it exists in the world. There is undoubtedly a remarkable hand of providence in it. When the Jews are called, that ancient people who were alone God's people for so long will be God's people again — never to be rejected. They will be gathered into one fold together with the Gentiles. The remnants of the ten tribes, wherever they may be, will also be brought in with their brothers the Jews, even though they have been cut off for much longer. The prophecies of Hosea especially seem to point to this: in the future glorious age of the church, both Judah and Ephraim — Judah and the ten tribes — will be brought in together and united as one people, as they were under David and Solomon. See Hosea 1:11, the last chapter of Hosea, and other parts of his prophecy.

We do not know when the conversion of the nation of Israel will take place, but this much Scripture allows us to determine: it will occur before the full glory of the Gentile church has been accomplished, since Romans 11:12 and 15 say that the Jews' inclusion will be like life from the dead for the Gentiles.

(5) Satan's pagan kingdom will also be overthrown at that time. Paganism now covers a large part of the earth — there are thought to be more pagans in the world today than members of all other religions combined: Jews, Muslims, and Christians. But then the pagan nations will be enlightened with the glorious Gospel. A wonderful spirit of compassion for them and zeal for their instruction and conversion will fill many people, and many will go out carrying the Gospel to them. The joyful sound will be heard among them, and the Sun of Righteousness will rise with His glorious light shining on those vast regions of the earth that have been covered with pagan darkness for many thousands of years — many of them doubtless since the times of Moses and Abraham — and have lain so long in a miserable condition under the cruel tyranny of the devil, who has all this time blinded and deceived them, dominated them, and made prey of them from generation to generation. Now the good news of the Gospel will sound among them, and they will be brought out of darkness into wonderful light.

God has promised that paganism will be destroyed in many places. He has said that "the gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens" (Jeremiah 10:11), and that He will completely abolish idols (Isaiah 2:18). Then the many nations of Africa — peoples who now seem to live in a condition scarcely above animals, and in many respects below them — will be enlightened with glorious light and delivered from all their darkness, becoming a civilized, Christian, educated, and holy people. Then the vast continent of America — which in so much of it is now covered with savage ignorance and cruelty — will be covered everywhere with the glorious light of the Gospel and Christian love. Instead of worshiping the devil as they

now do, they will serve God, and praises will be sung everywhere to the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Savior of the world. The same can be expected in that great and populous part of the world, the East Indies, which are now mostly inhabited by people who worship the devil. And so throughout the vast land of Greater Tartary, and in those regions toward the north and south poles that have been more recently discovered — where people now differ very little from animals except in that they worship the devil, which animals do not — the kingdom of Christ will be established. The same will be true of those countries that have not yet been discovered. All of this will gloriously fulfill Isaiah 35:1: "The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely." See also verses 6-7.

2. Having described what this overthrow of Satan's kingdom will consist of, I now turn to the second point: its universal scope. Satan's visible kingdom will be overthrown, and the kingdom of Christ established on its ruins, everywhere throughout the entire inhabited world. Then the promise made to Abraham will be fulfilled: "In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Christ will become the desire of all nations, as Haggai 2:7 declares. The kingdom of Christ will be extended to all nations and the entire earth in the most full and literal sense. Many passages of Scripture cannot be understood in any other way. What could be more universal than Isaiah 11:9: "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"? This is equivalent to saying: just as no part of the seabed is without water covering it, so no part of humanity will be without the knowledge of God. Isaiah 45:22 likewise foretells that all the ends of the earth will look to Christ and be saved. And to show that these words are

to be understood in the most universal sense, the following verse adds: "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."

The most universal language is also used in Daniel 7:27: "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One." The phrase "under the whole heaven" encompasses all without exception.

When the devil was cast out of the Roman empire — which was the greatest and most dominant part of the world, while the remaining nations were comparatively small and weak — it was depicted as Satan being cast out of heaven to the earth (Revelation 12:9). But Revelation 20:1-3 depicts him being cast out of the earth itself and shut up in hell. This is by far the greatest revolution that has ever taken place. That is why Revelation 16:17-18 says that when the seventh bowl was poured out, "there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty." This is the third great act of divine providence that Scripture compares to Christ's coming to judgment. So it is in Revelation 16:15: after the sixth bowl, after the devil's armies were gathered for their great battle, and just before Christ's glorious victory over them, it says, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame." It is also called Christ's coming in 2 Thessalonians 2:8: speaking of Antichrist, "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." See

also Daniel 7:13-14, where Christ's coming to establish His kingdom on earth and destroy Antichrist is described as coming "with the clouds of heaven." This event is more like Christ's final coming to judgment than any of the previous events that are similarly described, for two reasons.

(1) This event is so much greater and more universal in scope, making it more like the day of judgment, which concerns the entire world.

(2) Because of the great spiritual resurrection of the church of God that will accompany it — more closely resembling the general resurrection at the end of the world than any previous event. This spiritual resurrection is the one described as accompanied by judgment in Revelation 20:4.

(3) Because of the terrible judgments and fearful destruction that will be executed on God's enemies at that time. Without doubt, this event will be accompanied by a visible and awesome display of God's power against blasphemers, Deists, hardened heretics, and other enemies of Christ — destroying them with striking tokens of divine wrath and judgment. In particular, this event will be accompanied by terrible judgments on Antichrist, and the cruel persecutors connected to the Roman church will be destroyed in the most solemn and awful manner — compared in Daniel 7:11 to casting Antichrist into the burning flame, and in Revelation 19:20 to casting him alive into the lake burning with fire and brimstone.

Then that cruel, persecuting church will suffer judgments from God far more dreadful than the cruelest persecutions she inflicted on the saints, in keeping with Revelation 18:6-7. The judgments

God will execute on the enemies of the church are so severe that they are compared to God raining enormous hailstones from heaven on them, each weighing about a talent, as described with the pouring out of the seventh bowl in Revelation 16:21: "And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe." Now will come the treading of the wine press spoken of in Revelation 14:19-20.

(4) This event will put an end to the church's suffering state and will be accompanied by glorious and joyful praise. The church's afflicted condition has been long — continuing, with only brief interruptions, from the resurrection of Christ to this point. But now a final end will be put to her suffering state. After this, near the end of the world, the church will face a severe threat — but Revelation 20:3 says it will be only for a short time. Just as the church's periods of rest before the long day of affliction ends are brief, whatever suffering she experiences after this will be very brief. In every other sense, the day of the church's affliction and persecution will come to a final end. Scripture speaks of this time in many places as the end of the church's suffering state. Isaiah 51:22 records God saying to His church about this time: "Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling, the chalice of My anger; you will never drink it again." Then the proclamation of Isaiah 40:1-2 will go out to the church: "Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God. Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 54:8-9 also speaks of this time. So does Isaiah 60:20:

"The Lord will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be over." And Zephaniah 3:15: "The Lord has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more."

The time before this had been the church's sowing season — when she sowed in tears and in blood. But now is her harvest, when she will come again rejoicing, carrying her sheaves with her. Now the long labor of the woman clothed with the sun has come to an end. She has brought forth her son — for this glorious establishment of Christ's kingdom throughout the world is what the church had been in labor for, through such terrible suffering across so many ages. As Isaiah 26:17 says: "As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, she writhes and cries out in her labor pains, thus were we before You, O Lord." See also Isaiah 60:20 and Isaiah 61:10-11. Now the church will forget her sorrow, for a son has been born into the world. Now her joyful praise and triumph will follow. Her praises will rise to God from every part of the earth, as Isaiah 42:10-12 describes. And praise will fill not only the earth but also heaven. The church on earth and the church in heaven will both rejoice and praise God gloriously, as with one heart. Without doubt it will be a time of extraordinary joy and praise among the holy prophets and apostles and all the saints in heaven. Revelation 18:20: "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her." See how universal these praises will be in Isaiah 44:23: "Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it;

for the Lord has redeemed Jacob and in Israel He shows forth His glory." See also the great joyful praises sung to God on this occasion by the universal church in heaven and on earth in the opening of Revelation 19.

(5) This event is more like Christ's coming to judgment than any before it, because it so thoroughly ends the former state of the world and introduces the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Satan's visible kingdom — which has stood since the building of Babel — will be overthrown. The old heavens and old earth will pass away to a greater extent than ever before, and the new heavens and new earth will be established in far greater glory than at any prior time.

I have now shown how the success of Christ's purchase was carried forward through the afflicted state of the Christian church, from Christ's resurrection until Antichrist falls and Satan's visible kingdom on earth is overthrown. I now turn to the second part.

Second, I will show how the success of redemption will be carried forward through the period when the Christian church will for the most part be in a state of peace and prosperity. To do this, I will:

1. Describe the prosperous state of the church through most of this period.

2. Describe the great apostasy that will occur near the end of it, and how the church will be severely threatened by her enemies for a brief time.

I. I will first speak of the prosperous state of the church through most of this period. In doing so, I will: (1) describe this prosperous state of the church, and (2) say something about its duration.

First, I will describe the prosperous state the church will be in.

In general, I want to note two things.

1. This period is most properly the time of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Though the kingdom of heaven was established in some measure after Christ's resurrection, and more fully in the time of Constantine, and though the Christian church in every age is called the kingdom of heaven — still, the period we are discussing is the primary fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. It is the time the prophecies of Daniel are mainly pointing to when they speak of the kingdom of heaven, and it is from these prophecies that the Jews drew the phrase "kingdom of heaven."

2. This is also the primary fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies that speak of the glorious age of the Gospel in the latter days. Though those prophecies have already seen glorious fulfillment in the time of the apostles and in the time of Constantine, the language used is too elevated to be fully satisfied by anything other than what will follow the fall of Antichrist. This period is most properly the glorious day of the Gospel. All previous periods are only forerunners and preparation for this one. Previous times were the sowing season; this is the harvest. But more specifically:

- (1) It will be a time of great light and knowledge. Our present day is dark by comparison. The light of that glorious time will be so great that it is portrayed as a day with no night — no evening, no darkness. Zechariah 14:6-7: "In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light." It is further described as though God would give His church such light that it would so far surpass

the glory of the sun and moon that those luminaries would themselves be put to shame. Isaiah 24:23: "Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders."

A kind of veil is now cast over most of the world, keeping people in darkness — but then that veil will be destroyed. Isaiah 25:7: "And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations." Then all countries and nations — even those that are now most ignorant — will be filled with light and knowledge. Great knowledge will prevail everywhere. It may well be hoped that many people of African and Native American descent will then be theologians, and that excellent books will be published in Africa, in Ethiopia, in Tartary, and other places now considered remote or uneducated. And not only scholars, but people of ordinary education will be very knowledgeable in religious things. Isaiah 32:3-4: "Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the hasty will discern the truth." Knowledge will then be widespread among all kinds of people, in keeping with Jeremiah 31:34: "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

There will then be a wonderful untangling of the difficult doctrines of religion and a clearing up of apparent contradictions. Crooked things will be made straight, rough places will be made smooth, and darkness will become light before God's people. Difficulties in Scripture will be resolved, and wonderful things will

be discovered in the word of God that were never seen before. This great unveiling of previously hidden things in religion seems to be compared to removing the veil and revealing the ark of the covenant to the people — which previously was kept in the most hidden part of the temple and was never seen by them. So when the seventh angel sounds and it is proclaimed "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ," it adds that "the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple." So great will be the increase of knowledge in this time that heaven will be as it were opened to the church of God on earth.

(2) It will be a time of great holiness. Genuine, living faith will prevail and flourish everywhere. Religion will not be the empty profession it mostly is today — instead, holiness of heart and life will be abundant. Those times will be an exception to what Christ says about the ordinary state of the church — that few will be saved — for now holiness will become widespread. Isaiah 60:21: "Then all your people will be righteous." This does not mean there will be no one remaining outside of Christ — but visible wickedness will be suppressed everywhere, and genuine holiness will become the norm, though not absolute. It will be a remarkable time not only for the sheer number of godly people, but for the depth of their grace. Isaiah 65:20: "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred, and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed." And Zechariah 12:8: "In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like

the angel of the Lord before them." Holiness will be written, as it were, on everything — on all people's ordinary work and daily activities, and on the common things of life. All will be dedicated to God and used for holy purposes. Everything will be done to the glory of God. Isaiah 23:18: "Her profit and her pay will be set apart to the Lord." And Zechariah 14:20-21. As God's people will be outstanding in holiness of heart, so they will also be outstanding in holiness of life and practice.

(3) It will be a time when religion is supreme in every respect in the world. It will be held in great honor and esteem. The saints have for the most part been kept down throughout history, with wicked people holding the reins of power — but now the saints will be on top. "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One" (Daniel 7:27). "And they will reign upon the earth" (Revelation 5:10). "And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). In that day, people of genuine piety and faith will be the ones chiefly elevated to positions of trust and authority. Living faith will take possession of kings, palaces, and thrones, and those who hold the highest positions will be holy men. Isaiah 49:23: "Kings will be your guardians, and their princesses your nurses." Kings will devote all their power, glory, and wealth to advancing the honor of Christ and the good of His church. Isaiah 60:16: "You will also nurse at the breast of kings." The great people of the world, wealthy merchants, and others of influence will devote everything to Christ and His church. Psalm 45:12: "The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favor."

(4) Those will be times of great peace and love. There will be universal peace and goodwill among the nations of the world, in place of the confusion, wars, and bloodshed that have filled every age until now. Isaiah 2:4: "And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war." All the instruments of war are pictured as having become useless. Psalm 46:9: "He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire." See also Zechariah 9:10. Then all nations will dwell quietly and safely, without fear of any enemy. Isaiah 32:18: "Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places." Also Zechariah 8:10-11.

Then malice, envy, hatred, and revenge will be suppressed everywhere, and peace and love will prevail between people — which is most beautifully described in Isaiah 11:6-10. Peace and love will flourish between rulers and those they govern. Rulers will love their people and do everything in their power to seek their greatest good, while the people will love their rulers, joyfully submit to them, and give them the honor they deserve. There will be a wonderful love between pastors and their people as well. Malachi 4:6: "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers." The Christian virtues of gentleness, forgiveness, patience, joy, kindness, and brotherly love — those excellent fruits of the Spirit — will flourish in a remarkable

way. People's character and disposition will be like that of the Lamb of God, the lovely Jesus. The body will be conformed to its Head.

Then all the world will be united in one harmonious society. All nations in every part of the earth, on every side of the globe, will be bound together in sweet harmony. All parts of God's church will encourage and advance the spiritual good of one another. A connection will be maintained between all parts of the world for that purpose, and the art of navigation — which is now used so largely to serve human greed and pride, and is so often practiced by morally corrupt people — will be dedicated to God and used for holy purposes, as Isaiah 60:5-9 describes. It will be a time when people will express their love for one another abundantly, not only in words but in acts of generosity, as we learn from Isaiah 32:5: "No longer will the fool be called noble, or the rogue be spoken of as generous" — and verse 8: "But the noble man devises noble plans; and by noble plans he stands."

(5) It will be a time of excellent order in the church of Christ. The true governance and discipline of the church will be established and practiced. The entire world will be as one church — one orderly, well-organized, beautiful society. As the body is one, so the members will be in beautiful proportion to each other. Psalm 122:3 will be fulfilled: "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together."

(6) The church of God will be beautiful and glorious on all these counts — indeed it will appear in perfect beauty. Isaiah 60:1: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Isaiah 61:10: "He has wrapped me with a robe of

righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." For all these reasons, the church will then be the greatest image of heaven itself.

(7) That will be a time of the greatest earthly prosperity. Such a spiritual state as described has a natural tendency to produce temporal blessing: it promotes health and long life. Zechariah 8:4 confirms this will actually be the case: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.'" It also naturally produces ease, quietness, joy, and cheerfulness, along with wealth and a great increase of children — as is suggested in Zechariah 8:5: "And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets." Beyond this, the earthly prosperity of God's people will also be enriched by a remarkable blessing from heaven. Isaiah 65:21: "They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit." And Micah 4:4: "Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid." Zechariah 8:12: "For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things." See also Jeremiah 31:12-13 and Amos 9:13. They will also receive every kind of sign of God's presence, acceptance, and favor. Jeremiah 33:9: "It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it." Even the days of Solomon were only a faint image of those days in terms of the earthly prosperity that will prevail.

(8) It will also be a time of great rejoicing. Isaiah 35:10: "And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." Isaiah 55:12: "For you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you." Isaiah 66:11: "That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, that you may suck deeply and be delighted with her bountiful bosom." Isaiah 12:3: "Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation." That will be the church's glorious wedding day — as far as her wedding with Christ is ever celebrated on earth. Revelation 19:7: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." Verse 9: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." But I now turn to the second part.

Second, I will say something about how long this prosperous state of the church will last. I will be brief on this point. Scripture consistently portrays it as an extended period. The earlier times of rest and prosperity, as noted before, are represented as brief — but the descriptions of this state are quite different. Revelation 20:4: "And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus — and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Isaiah 60:15: "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation."

This is sufficient regarding the prosperous state of the church through most of the period from the destruction of Satan's visible kingdom in the world to Christ's appearing in the clouds of heaven

to judgment.

2. I now turn to speak of the great apostasy that will occur near the end of this period, and how severely the church will be threatened for a short time by her enemies. I will address this under three points.

1. Shortly before the end of the world, there will be a very great apostasy in which a large part of the world will fall away from Christ and His church. Revelation 20:3 says that Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit, shut up, and sealed so that he could no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed — and that after that he must be released for a short time. Accordingly, verses 7-8 tell us that when the thousand years end, Satan will be released from prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog. This suggests the apostasy will be very widespread. The nations of the four corners of the earth will be deceived, and the number of those who will then turn against Christ will be immense — pictured in Ezekiel as the army of Gog and Magog, and described in Revelation 20:8 as being as numerous as the sand of the sea, going up over the breadth of the earth as though their army stretched from one end of it to the other.

So after such a happy and glorious era — a day of light and holiness, of love, peace, and joy — it will once again become a dark time. Satan will begin to reestablish his dominion in the world. The world will once again become a scene of darkness and wickedness. The bottomless pit of hell will be opened, and evil forces will rise up out of it again, and a dreadful darkness will spread to obscure the world. The church of Christ, instead of covering the entire world as it did before, will be reduced to narrow boundaries

again. Humanity, having lived so long in such great prosperity, will begin to abuse that prosperity to serve their sinful desires. This we learn from Luke 17:26 and following.

2. These apostates will mount fierce opposition against the church of God. The church will appear on the verge of a sudden and complete overthrow. Scripture says Satan will gather them together for battle, as numerous as sand on the seashore, and they will go up over the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city. That beloved city will seem on the verge of being swallowed up — for her enemies will not merely threaten her, but will actually have gathered against her. More than that, they will have besieged her and surrounded her on every side.

Nothing in the prophecy suggests that the church will actually fall into their hands the way the church fell into the hands of Antichrist, to whom it was given to make war with the saints and overcome them. God will never allow that to happen again after the fall of Antichrist, for then the day of her mourning will be ended. But the church will appear to be under the most imminent threat of sudden and complete destruction.

3. At this point the state of things will most compellingly call for Christ's immediate appearance to judgment. The world will be filled with more extreme wickedness than it has ever known. By far the greater part of the world will have become openly and visibly wicked — avowed enemies of Christ — and their wickedness will be terribly compounded by their apostasy. Before the fall of Antichrist, most of the world was also full of visibly wicked people — but most of those were poor pagans who had never received the light of the Gospel, or others who had been raised in the darkness

of Islam or Roman Catholicism. These people will be different: they will have apostatized from the Christian church and the visible kingdom of Christ, in which they had enjoyed the great light and privileges of the glorious age of the church — privileges that will be incomparably greater than what the church of God enjoys today. This apostasy will be more like the apostasy of the fallen angels than any that has come before. The angels fell and became enemies of Christ though they had enjoyed the light of heaven — and these people will fall away and become His enemies though they enjoyed the light and privileges of the church's most glorious age. That such people would turn into open, avowed enemies of Christ and seek the destruction of His church will cry out for the immediate vengeance that was executed on the demons when they fell.

The wickedness of the world will loudly call for Christ's immediate appearing in flaming fire to take vengeance, because of how that wickedness will manifest — particularly in mocking and blaspheming Christ and His holy religion. They will scoff at the idea of Christ's coming to judgment, which the church will be expecting and warning them about. For then will surely come another fulfillment — and the greatest fulfillment — of 2 Peter 3:3-4: "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'" They will have no expectation of Christ coming to judgment and will laugh at the very idea. They will trample such things underfoot and give themselves over to their passions — eating and drinking and wallowing in sensual pleasures as though they will live here forever. They will despise the church's warnings about the coming of Christ

to judgment, just as the people of the ancient world despised what Noah told them about the approaching flood, and just as the people of Sodom did when Lot said to them, "The Lord will destroy this city." Their wickedness on this account will cry out to heaven for Christ to appear in flaming fire to take vengeance on His enemies. Another way their wickedness will show itself will be in the violent wicked plot and assault they will attempt against the holy city of God — that city where for so long, and so recently, so much of the religion of Christ had been visible. They will be on the verge of carrying out the most terrible design against that church.

The sheer number of the wicked at that time will also especially call for Christ's coming. The world will no doubt be extremely populous by then, having continued so long in such great prosperity, without the devastating plagues of war, disease, and similar catastrophes that normally reduce population. Most of that teeming world will be wicked, contemptuous apostates from God. Without question that will be a day when the world is far more filled with wickedness than at any point since creation. If the wickedness of the ancient world — when people were multiplying on the earth — called for its destruction by a flood of water, this wickedness will equally call for its destruction by a flood of fire.

Furthermore, the circumstances of the church at that time will also urgently call for Christ's immediate appearing, as she will be surrounded by blasphemous and murderous enemies on the verge of being swallowed up. It will be a time of extreme distress for the church — the only comfort being the hope of deliverance from God — for all other help will appear to have failed. The situation will have reached its final extremity, and there will be an immediate need for Christ to come to their rescue. Even though the church

will be under such a severe threat, God's providence will so arrange things that she will be preserved until Christ appears in His immediate presence, coming in the glory of His Father with all His holy angels. Then will come the time when all the elect are gathered in. The work of conversion that has been carried on since the beginning of the church after the fall through all those ages will come to an end. Not one more soul will ever be converted. Every one of those many millions whose names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world will have been brought in — not one soul will be lost. The mystical body of Christ, which has been growing since it first began in the days of Adam, will be complete, with every single member in place. In this respect, the work of redemption will now be finished. The purpose for which the means of grace were established will have been fully achieved. All the effect that was intended to be accomplished through them will now have been accomplished.

SECTION 2



I have now shown how the success of Christ's redemption has been accomplished throughout the duration of the Christian church under the means of grace. We have seen the great revolutions that have occurred and are yet to come during this span of time — how the great wheels of providence have turned for the accomplishment of that kind of success of Christ's purchase which consists in the bestowal of grace on the elect. And now in our survey we have arrived at the time when all the wheels have completed their turning, the course of this state of things is finished, and everything is ready for Christ's coming to judgment.

You may recall that when I began to discuss this third proposition — that from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world, the entire time is devoted to bringing about the success and effect of Christ's purchase of redemption — I observed that the success of Christ's purchase is of two kinds: consisting either in grace or in glory. The success consisting in grace is seen in God's works during the ages when the church continues under the means of grace. The success consisting in glory will be chiefly accomplished at the day of judgment.

Having now shown how the first kind of success — grace — has been accomplished, I turn to the second: the kind of success accomplished in the bestowal of glory on the church, which will chiefly occur at the day of judgment. I want to make two or three general observations about this kind of success of Christ's purchase.

1. The greatness of the success of Christ's purchase is most clearly seen here. The success of Christ's purchase ultimately consists in the salvation of the elect. And this bestowal of glory is pre-eminently called their salvation. Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." It is also called redemption, being the thing in which the redemption of the church most fully consists — as in Ephesians 4:30: "sealed for the day of redemption," and Luke 21:28, and Ephesians 1:14: "the redemption of God's own possession."

2. Everything before this — while the church is under the means of grace — is only preparing the way for the success that will be accomplished in the bestowal of glory. The means of grace are designed to prepare people for glory, and God's grace itself is given to the elect to make them fit for glory.

3. All the glorious things accomplished for the church while she is under the means of grace are only images and shadows of this final glory. This is true of the glorious things accomplished for the church in the days of Constantine the Great, and it is true of all the glory to be accomplished in the glorious age of the church that follows the fall of Antichrist. Great as that glory will be, it is all only a shadow of what will be bestowed at the day of judgment. That is

why, as I have already noted many times, all those preceding events through which God did glorious things for His church are described in Scripture as images of Christ's final coming to judgment.

But I will proceed more specifically to show how this kind of success of Christ's purchase will be accomplished.

1. Christ will appear in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels, coming in the clouds of heaven. When the world is reveling in its wickedness, surrounding the holy city and just about to destroy it, and when the church has been brought to such a desperate situation, then the glorious Redeemer will appear. He through whom this redemption has been carried forward through all the ages will appear visibly to the world. The light of His glory will break forth, and the entire world will immediately become aware of it. People will look up and behold this astonishing sight. "Every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7). Christ will appear in His human nature — in that same body that was born in a stable and laid in a manger, and that was afterward so cruelly treated and nailed to the cross.

People will look up and see Him coming in such majesty and glory as we can barely conceive of now. The brightness of the sun in a clear sky will seem like darkness in comparison, and all the glorious angels and archangels will attend Him — thousands of thousands ministering to Him, ten thousand times ten thousand surrounding Him. How different a person He will appear from what He was at His first coming, when He was "a root out of dry ground," a poor, despised, suffering man! How different His appearance now — surrounded by glorious angels, principalities, and powers in the heavenly realms, attending Him as His servants —

from when He stood encircled by soldiers in His mock robe and crown of thorns to be struck and spat upon, or when He hung on the cross between two thieves with a crowd of enemies mocking Him!

This sight will come as a complete shock to the wicked world — like a cry in the middle of the night. It will catch them in the middle of their wickedness and fill them with dread. It will instantly break up their revelries, their eating and drinking and celebrating. It will immediately put an end to the campaign of the great army then surrounding the camp of the saints, making them drop their weapons. The world at that time will be very densely populated, and most of those people will be wicked. The earth will be filled with agonized screaming and crying — for "all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him" (Revelation 1:7). Where will they hide? How terrifying will the sight of that awesome majesty be to people caught in the middle of their wickedness? Then they will see who He is — what kind of person He is — whom they mocked and scoffed at, and whose church they were trying to destroy. That sight will change their voices. The sounds of their laughter and singing as they were marrying and making merry, and the sounds of their scoffing, will turn into hideous, hellish screaming. Their faces will change from expressions of worldly pleasure, arrogant pride, and contempt for God's people to expressions of ghastly terror and astonishment — trembling and chattering of teeth will seize them.

But for the saints — the church of Christ — this will be a joyful and most glorious sight. In an instant it will deliver them from all fear of their enemies, who had just been surrounding them on the verge of destroying them. Deliverance will come in their darkest

hour. The glorious Captain of their salvation will appear for them at a time when no other help was in sight. They will then lift up their heads, for their redemption will be drawing near (Luke 21:28). Christ will appear with infinite majesty, and yet at the same time they will see infinite love in His face toward them. To see their Redeemer coming in the clouds of heaven will fill their hearts with joy. Their faces will also be changed — but not as the faces of the wicked. They will change from sorrow to overflowing joy and triumph. Now the work of redemption will be finished in another sense: the entire church will be completely and eternally freed from all persecution and harassment from wicked people and demons.

2. The last trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised and the living transformed. God once sent out His angels with the sound of a trumpet to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth in a figurative sense — before the destruction of Jerusalem — that is, He sent out the apostles and others to preach the Gospel throughout the world. In a similar figurative sense the great trumpet was blown at the beginning of the glorious age of the church. But now the great trumpet is blown in a more literal sense, with a mighty sound that shakes the earth. A great signal will be given by a mighty sound called "the voice of the archangel" — as the angel of greatest power. 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God." At the sound of the great trumpet, the dead will be raised everywhere. The number of the dead at that point will be enormous. Death has been cutting people down ever since the world began. But by that time the number will be vastly greater still, since the world will have stood so much longer, and

through most of the remaining time will no doubt have been far more densely populated than it has ever been. All of them will now rise from the dead. Graves will be opened everywhere in every part of the world, and the sea will give up the countless dead within it (Revelation 20:13).

Now all who ever lived on the face of the earth — from the beginning of the world to that time — will appear on earth at once. All who ever belonged to the church of God in every age will be there: Adam and Eve, the first parents of humanity; Abel, Seth, and Methuselah, and all the saints who lived alongside them; Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets of Israel; the saints in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and all who belonged to the church in their day; all the holy apostles of Jesus Christ and all the saints of their time; all the holy martyrs under the ten pagan persecutions. All who belonged to the church in its wilderness state during the dark times of Antichrist, and all the holy martyrs who suffered under the cruelty of Roman Catholic persecution; and all the saints of the present time, and all who are in this assembly among the rest, and all who will live from now until the end of the world. And all the enemies of the church who ever existed in any age will also appear on the face of the earth again: all the wicked who perished in the flood, and the multitudes who died throughout the world among God's professing people and others; all who died in the pagan nations before Christ, and all wicked pagans, Jews, Muslims, and Roman Catholics who have died since. Every kind of sinner will be there: the outwardly respectable hypocrite, the openly godless drunk, the sexually immoral, heretics, Deists, all cruel persecutors, and all who have died or will die in their sins among us.

At the same time the dead are raised, the living will be transformed. The bodies of the wicked still living at that time will be changed to make them fit for eternal punishment without ever decaying. And the bodies of all the living saints will be transformed to be like Christ's glorious body (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). The bodies of the saints will be so changed that they will be forever incapable of pain, affliction, or discomfort. All dullness and every deformity their bodies once had will be stripped away, and they will be clothed with strength, beauty, vitality, and incorruptible, unfading glory. In such glory will the bodies of all the risen saints appear.

Now the work of redemption will be finished in yet another respect: all the elect will at last be actually redeemed in both soul and body. Before this moment, the work of redemption in its actual results had been incomplete — only the souls of the redeemed had been actually saved and glorified, with a few exceptions. But now all the bodies of the saints will be saved and glorified together. The elect will be glorified in the whole person, soul and body united.

3. The entire church of saints will now be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, while all wicked people and demons will be arraigned before the judgment seat. When the dead saints are raised, the entire church — all the elect through all ages — will be standing together on the face of the earth, at least all except the few whose bodies were glorified before. Then they will all rise up into the air, as with wings, to meet Christ. It appears that Christ, when He comes to judgment, will not come all the way down to the ground, but will establish His throne in the air in the region of the clouds, from where He can be seen by all the vast

multitude gathered before Him. The church of saints will therefore be taken up from the earth to ascend to their Savior. The apostle tells us that when the dead in Christ are raised and the living transformed, those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so they will always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). What a wonderful sight that will be — when all those many millions of saints are seen rising up from every part of the world!

Then the work of redemption will be finished in another respect: the entire church will be perfectly and forever delivered from this present evil world, leaving this cursed ground behind for good. They will take their eternal leave of this earth — where they have been strangers, where for the most part they have known trouble and sorrow, where the devil has mostly reigned as god and caused them great misery, which has been a scene of wickedness and abomination, where Christ their Lord was cruelly treated, and where they have been hated, slandered, and persecuted age after age through most of world history. They will leave it beneath their feet as they go to Christ and never set foot on it again. An eternal separation will be made between them and the wicked. Before this they were mixed together, and in many cases it was impossible to tell which was which — but now all will become visible. Both saints and sinners will appear in their true character.

Then the entire church will be seen streaming together in the air toward the place where Christ has fixed His throne — coming from east and west, north and south, to stand at Christ's right hand. What an enormous company it will be! Think of all who have ever belonged to the church of God: all who lived before Christ, all the multitude of saints in the apostles' time, all who lived in the

days of Constantine the Great, all who lived before and since the Reformation, all the vast number of saints in the glorious age of the church when the whole earth will be filled with believers for so many generations, and all those living when Christ comes. What an immense gathering they will form as they all stream together in the region of the clouds at Christ's right hand!

Then the work of redemption will also be finished in yet another respect: the entire church will be gathered together. They had always belonged to one society, but had been greatly separated by where they lived — some in heaven, some on earth; and those on earth were separated from each other, many by vast oceans and great continents. But now they will all be gathered together, never to be separated again. Not only will all members of the church be gathered together, but all will be gathered to their Head — into His immediate and glorious presence — never to be separated from Him again. This had never happened before.

At the same time, all wicked people and demons will be brought before the judgment seat of Christ. They will be gathered to Christ's left hand and, as it appears, will remain on the earth — not caught up into the air as the saints will be. The devil — that ancient serpent — will be dragged up out of hell. He who first brought about the fall and misery of humanity, and so set himself against their redemption, and who throughout all of history has shown himself to be such a bitter enemy of the Redeemer — he will never again have anything to do with the church of God, or be permitted to afflict or trouble any member of it in any way, ever again. Instead, he must now be judged and receive the full penalty for his deeds. Now has come the time he has always dreaded and trembled to think about — the time when he must be judged and re-

ceive his complete punishment. He who through his temptation maliciously caused Christ's crucifixion, and triumphed over it as though he had won the victory — he will now see the consequences of the death of Christ he brought about. Christ's coming to judge him in His human nature is itself a consequence of that death, for Christ won and purchased this glory for Himself through that very death. Now he must stand before that same Jesus whose death he engineered — to be judged, condemned, and eternally destroyed by Him. If Satan, the prince of hell, trembled at the thought of it thousands of years before — how much more will he tremble, proud and stubborn as he is, when he actually stands at Christ's bar!

He will also stand at the bar of the saints whom he has so hated, afflicted, and harassed — for the saints will judge him alongside Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:3: "Do you not know that we will judge angels?" Now he will in a sense be crushed under the feet of the church, in keeping with Romans 16:20. When Satan first tempted our first parents to fall, he deceitfully and falsely told them they would become like gods. Little did he imagine that the consequence would be that they would actually be so much like God as to sit with God in judgment over him. Even less did he anticipate that the consequence would be that one from the very nature he tempted — one of the descendants of those he tempted — would actually be united to God, and that as God He would judge the world, and that Satan himself would stand trembling and astonished before His judgment seat. But so it will be: all the demons in hell who have so opposed Christ and His kingdom will at last stand in absolute horror and amazement before Christ and His church as sentence is pronounced against them.

Now all Christ's other enemies will also be brought to appear before Him. The proud scribes and Pharisees who held such malignant hatred toward Christ during His humiliation — who persecuted Him to death, before whose judgment seat Christ once stood as a criminal at their bar, and who mocked Him, struck Him, and spat in His face — they will now see Christ in His glory, just as Christ warned them in that very moment (Matthew 26:64-65). Then Christ stood before their judgment seat. But now it is their turn. They will stand before His judgment seat with inconceivable horror and amazement — with ghastly faces, trembling limbs, chattering teeth, and knees knocking together.

All the cruel enemies and persecutors of the church from every age will appear together. Pharaoh and the Egyptians, Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecuting scribes and Pharisees, the persecuting pagan emperors, Julian the Apostate, the cruel persecuting Popes and Roman Catholics, Gog and Magog — all will appear at once before the judgment seat of Christ. They and the saints who were persecuted by them in every age will come face to face and must confront one another before the great Judge. The saints on their glorious thrones will now be made judges over those unjust kings and rulers who previously judged and condemned them and cruelly put them to death. Those persecutors will behold the glory of those whom they once so cruelly despised and mistreated. Christ will cause those holy martyrs to come and place their feet on the necks of their persecutors — they will be made their footstool.

How wonderfully different will everything be from how it was in the former ages of the world. Now all things will be set right.

4. The righteousness of the church will be made clear for all to see, and all the wickedness of their enemies will be brought to light. The saints who had been objects of hatred, contempt, and slander in the world — who were slandered and condemned by their persecutors without cause — will now be fully vindicated. They will appear clothed with the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness. It will be plainly evident to all the world that Christ's righteousness is theirs, and they will shine forth in it gloriously. Their genuine holiness will also be made plain, and all their good works will be brought to light. The good things they did in secret will now be made openly known. Those holy ones of God who had been treated as though they were the filth and scum of the earth — as though they were unfit to live, worse than animals or demons — will now, when things appear as they truly are, be revealed as the noblest people on earth. God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their vindication as the noonday sun. Then it will be clear who were truly the ones unfit to live, when all the wickedness of the enemies of Christ and His church — their pride, their hatred, their cruelty, their contempt for true religion — is set forth in all its hideous detail and in its true nature.

Now the righteous will be heard before this great Judge — they who could not be heard before those unjust judges. They will declare their cause, rise up in judgment against their persecutors, and testify to how they were treated. Now all the wickedness of the wicked throughout the entire world will be brought to light. All their secret sins and the contents of their very hearts will be opened for examination, turned inside out as it were before the blazing light of that great day. Things spoken in private, in secret

rooms, and done in darkness will be exposed in the light and proclaimed before all angels and people who are, ever were, or ever will be.

5. The sentence will be pronounced on the righteous and the wicked. Christ, the glorious Judge, will pronounce that blessed sentence on the church at His right hand: "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This sentence will be pronounced with infinite love, and the voice will be most sweet, causing every heart to overflow with joy. Christ will thus pronounce a sentence of justification on thousands and millions who previously had sentences of condemnation pronounced on them by their persecuting rulers. He will honor those who had been despised: He will own them as His, will place a crown of glory on their heads before the entire world, and they will then shine forth as the sun — with Jesus Christ in glory and joy — in full view of all their enemies.

Then the sentence of condemnation will be passed on the wicked: "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." This sentence will condemn the church's enemies — a sentence in which the holy martyrs who suffered from them will concur. When the words of this sentence are spoken, they will strike every heart on the left with inconceivable horror and dread. Every syllable will strike those hearts more terribly than a bolt of lightning. We can barely imagine the expressions of horror that will fill that vast crowd — the screaming, the trembling, the gnashing of teeth, the contorted faces, the hideous looks, the hideous sounds.

6. After this, Christ and all His church of saints, with all the holy angels ministering to them, will leave this lower world and ascend toward the highest heavens. Christ will ascend in glory as great as — and in some respects greater than — His descent: for now He will ascend with His elect church with Him, glorified in both body and soul. Christ's first ascension to heaven shortly after His own resurrection was very glorious. But this second ascension — the ascension of His mystical body, His whole church — will be far more glorious. The redeemed church will all ascend with Him in most joyful and triumphant fashion, while all their enemies and persecutors — left behind on the cursed ground to face destruction — will watch them go and hear their songs.

So Christ's church will forever leave this cursed world to enter that more glorious world — the highest heavens, the paradise of God, the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

7. After they have ascended, this world will be set on fire and turned into a great furnace in which all the enemies of Christ and His church will be tormented forever. This is made clear by 2 Peter 3:7: "But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." After Christ and His church have ascended to a distance from this world, leaving that miserable company of the wicked behind to have their sentence carried out, this entire lower world will be set ablaze — whether by fire from heaven, or by fire breaking out from within the earth, or both, as happened with the waters in the time of the flood. However it comes, this lower world will be consumed by fire. How the wicked will be struck with horror when the fire begins to seize them and they find no way to es-

cape, flee, or hide from it! What screaming and crying will there be among those many millions when they begin to enter that great furnace — when the whole world becomes a furnace of the fiercest and most intense heat! The apostle Peter says (2 Peter 3:10, 12) that "the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" and that "the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat." So fierce will the heat be that it will burn through the earth to its very core — which seems to be what Deuteronomy 32:22 means: "For a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains."

Here all the persecutors of the church of God will burn in everlasting fire — they who once burned the saints at the stake — suffering torments far beyond anything their most cruel ingenuity could inflict on the saints. Here the bodies of all the wicked will burn, tormented to all eternity, never consumed. And God's wrath will be poured out on their souls as well. Though the souls of the wicked in hell already suffer dreadful punishment, their punishment will be intensified at the day of judgment — so much so that what they suffered before is, by comparison, like imprisonment compared to the execution that follows. Now the devil — that ancient serpent — will receive his full punishment. Now the thing he has always trembled to think about will fully come upon him. This world, which was formerly the seat of his kingdom — where he set himself up as God — will now be the place of his complete punishment and endless torment.

In this, one of the purposes of the work of redemption mentioned earlier — putting Christ's enemies under His feet — will be perfectly accomplished. His enemies will now be made His footstool in the fullest sense. Now will come the most perfect fulfillment of Genesis 3:15: "He shall bruise you on the head."

8. At the same time, all the church will enter with Christ their glorious Lord into the highest heaven, and there will begin the state of their highest and eternal blessedness and glory. While the lower world they left beneath their feet is seized by the fire of God's judgment — flames kindling across it, the wicked entering into everlasting fire — the whole church will enter joyfully with their glorious Head and all the holy angels attending them into the eternal paradise of God, the palace of the great God, their heavenly Father. The gates will open wide for them to enter, and there Christ will bring them into His chambers in the fullest sense. He will bring them into His Father's house — a world nothing like the one they have left. Here Christ will present them in glory to His Father, saying in effect: "Here I am, and the children You gave Me" — meaning, Here I am with every one of those You gave Me from eternity to care for, so that they might be redeemed and glorified. To redeem them I have done and suffered so much, and to make way for their redemption I have been bringing about such great changes across so many ages. Here they are, now perfectly redeemed in body and soul. I have perfectly delivered them from all the consequences of the fall and perfectly freed them from all their enemies. I have gathered them all together into one glorious society and united them all in Myself. I have openly justified them before all angels and humanity, and I have brought them all away from that cursed world where they suffered so much, and have

brought them before Your throne. I have done everything for them that You appointed Me to do. I have perfectly cleansed them from all filth in My blood, and here they are in perfect holiness, shining with Your perfect image.

Then the Father will receive them all, own them all as His children, and welcome them to the eternal and perfect inheritance and glory of His house. On this occasion He will give more glorious expressions of His love than ever before and will admit them to a fuller and more perfect enjoyment of Himself.

Now will come the marriage of the Lamb in the most complete sense. The beginning of the glorious age of the church on earth after the fall of Antichrist is represented as the marriage of the Lamb, and that will be the highest form of the marriage of the Lamb that ever takes place on earth — but after this we read of another marriage of the Lamb at the close of the day of judgment. After the apostle John gave his account of the day of judgment at the close of Revelation 20, he proceeds to describe what follows in chapters 21 and 22. In Revelation 21:2 he gives an account of seeing the holy city, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. When Christ brings His church into His Father's house in heaven after the judgment, He will bring her there as His bride — having at last presented to Himself the one He loved and gave Himself for, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

The bridegroom and the bride will enter heaven together, both clothed in their wedding garments, attended by all the glorious angels. There they will enter into the feast and joy of their marriage before the Father, and an everlasting wedding day will begin. This will be the day of Christ's great rejoicing — the gladness of His heart — and all the saints will rejoice with Him. Christ will rejoice

over His bride, and the bride will rejoice in her husband, in the state of her perfect and everlasting blessedness — described in detail in Revelation 21 and 22.

Now the entire work of redemption is finished. We have traced how it was carried forward from the fall of humanity to this moment. Now it is complete in every respect. The capstone of the building is laid. Through this entire study we have followed the church of God through all its great changes, all its tossings back and forth, all the storms and tempests across so many ages of the world — until at last we have seen an end to all those storms. We have seen her enter the harbor and land in the highest heavens, in complete and eternal glory, all her members whole in soul and body. We have journeyed through time and its various ages, guided by God's providence and God's word, and now we have arrived in eternity — after time is no more. We have seen all the church's enemies fixed in endless misery, and we have seen the church presented in her perfect redemption before the Father in heaven, there to enjoy glory beyond all words and thought. And there we leave her to enjoy this glory throughout the never-ending ages of eternity.

Now all Christ's enemies will be perfectly placed under His feet, and He will have His most perfect triumph over sin and Satan, and all Satan's instruments, and death, and hell. Now all the promises made to Christ by God the Father before the foundation of the world — the promises of the covenant of redemption — will be fully accomplished. Christ will now perfectly have obtained the joy that was set before Him, for which He undertook the great sufferings of His state of humiliation. Now all the hopes and expectations of the saints will be fulfilled. The state the church had been in

before was one of progress and preparation — but now she has arrived at her most perfect state of glory. All the glory of the church's glorious age on earth is only a faint shadow of her consummate glory in heaven.

Now Christ the great Redeemer will be most perfectly glorified. God the Father will be glorified in Him. And the Holy Spirit will be most fully glorified in the perfection of His work in the hearts of all the church. And now that new heaven and new earth — that renewed state of things that has been building since Christ's resurrection — will be completely finished, after every element of the old heavens and old earth is destroyed. Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away." Now the great Redeemer will have completed everything belonging to the work of redemption that began so soon after the fall of humanity. Who can conceive of the triumphant praises that will be sung in heaven on this great occasion — praises so much greater than those sung at the fall of Antichrist, which already occasioned praises like those described in Revelation 19! The apostle John seems to lack words to describe those praises and says: "It was like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.'" But the praises sung in heaven after the final completion of all things will be even more inexpressible. How those praises from that vast and glorious multitude will be like mighty thunderings indeed.

Now how completely all former things have passed away, and what a glorious state has been established to remain for all eternity! Just as Christ, when He first entered into the work of redemption after the fall of humanity, was given the kingdom by the

Father and took on Himself the administration of all the affairs of the universe — managing everything to serve the purposes of this redemptive work — so now, the work being finished, He will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:24: "Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." This does not mean Christ will cease to reign or have a kingdom after this — for Luke 1:33 says "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." And Daniel 7:14: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." Rather, the meaning is that Christ will surrender the particular kingdom and authority He holds over the world as the Father's appointed representative — the administration committed to Him to serve the great design of redemption. The purpose of this commission from the Father was to accomplish this specific work of redemption. When that design is fully completed, the commission will end, and Christ will return it to the Father from whom He received it.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE WHOLE



I will now draw some conclusions from everything that has been said in this doctrine.

1. From what has been said, we can see how great a work this work of redemption is. We have now had it set before us in imperfect outline — the whole course of it, from its beginning after the fall to the end of the world when it is complete. We have seen how God has built this structure from its first foundation, through a long succession of wonderful works, advancing it higher and higher from one age to the next, until the capstone is laid at the end of the world. Let us consider how great a work this is. When people behold some great palace or cathedral, they sometimes marvel at its magnificence and are almost astonished at what a great undertaking it was to build such a structure. How much more should we marvel at this great building of God — which He has been raising age after age through a series of such great accomplishments! There are three things from what has been said that especially demonstrate the greatness of the work of redemption.

1. The greatness of the specific events and providential acts by which it is accomplished. How great the things God has done are — each one a part of this great work! What great things were done in the world to prepare the way for Christ's coming to accomplish the purchase, and what great things were done in the purchase of redemption itself! What a wonderful thing was accomplished to put Christ in immediate position for this purchase: His incarnation — that God should become man! What great things were done in that purchase: that the eternal God should live on earth for thirty-five years in a humble, despised condition, spending His life in labor and suffering, and at last dying on the cross! What great things have been done to bring about the success of Christ's redemption! What great things were done to equip Him to accomplish this success! For this purpose He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and all things were made subject to Him. How many miracles have been performed, what mighty revolutions have already taken place in the world — and how much greater ones are yet to come!

2. The sheer number of these great events through which God carries on this work also demonstrates its greatness. These mighty revolutions are so numerous that they fill many ages. The specific wonderful events in the work of creation filled six days — but the great acts of providence through which the work of redemption is carried on are so many that they fill at least six or seven thousand years, as we have reason to conclude from God's word. Great things were done in this work before the flood, and in the flood itself the world was destroyed by water while God's church was wonderfully preserved to carry the work forward. After the flood, what great things God did — relating to the resettling of the world, the

building of Babel, the dispersing of the nations, the shortening of human lifespans, the calling of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that long series of wonderful providences connected with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and the wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, in Canaan in Joshua's time, and through a long succession of remarkable providences age after age toward the nation of the Jews!

What great things God did in overturning the world so many times before Christ came, to prepare the way for His coming! What great things were done in Christ's time, and afterward in overthrowing Satan's kingdom in the pagan Roman empire, in preserving His church through the dark times of Roman Catholicism, and in bringing about the Reformation! And how many great and wonderful things will yet be accomplished in bringing in the glorious age of the church, and at Christ's final coming on the day of judgment, in the destruction of this world, and in bringing the entire church into heaven.

3. The glorious outcome of the whole — in the perfect and eternal destruction of the wicked, and in the consummate glory of the righteous. Let us take one final look at this building now that everything is finished and the capstone laid. It appeared at a glorious height in the apostles' time, and far more glorious in the time of Constantine, and will appear more glorious still after the fall of Antichrist — but at the completion of all things it appears in immensely greater glory than ever before. Now it stands in its fullest magnificence — a towering and complete structure whose top reaches to the very heaven of heavens, a building worthy of the great God, the King of kings.

From what has been said, one may conclude that the work of redemption is the greatest of all God's works of which we have any knowledge, and that it is the end toward which all His other works are directed. It is plain from everything said that this work is the central work of all God's providence, and that all other works of providence are subordinate to it. Every revolution in the world serves this great design. In this sense the work of redemption is, as it were, the sum of all God's works of providence.

This shows how much greater the work of redemption is than the work of creation — for I have observed several times that the work of providence exceeds the work of creation because it is creation's purpose, just as the use of a house is the end for which the house is built. But the work of redemption, as I have just said, is the sum of all God's providential works — everything is subordinate to it. So the work of the new creation is more excellent than the old. Whenever God removes one thing to make way for another, the new one surpasses the old. So the temple surpassed the tabernacle; the new covenant surpassed the old; the new dispensation of the Gospel surpassed the dispensation of Moses; the throne of David surpassed the throne of Saul; the priesthood of Christ surpassed the priesthood of Aaron; the new Jerusalem surpasses the old — and so the new creation far surpasses the old.

God has used His creation for no other purpose than to serve this great work. For this end He created and ordered humanity, angels, the earth, and the highest heavens. God created the world to provide a bride and a kingdom for His Son. The establishment of Christ's kingdom and the spiritual marriage of that bride to Him is the goal toward which the entire creation labors and strains. The work of redemption is so far the greatest of all God's works that all

other works should be regarded either as parts of it or as appendages to it — and all can in some way be traced back to it. So too all the decrees of God relate in some way to the eternal covenant of redemption that was made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world. Every decree of God is in some way reducible to that covenant.

Since the work of redemption is so great, we need not be surprised that the angels long to look into it. Nor need we be surprised that Scripture makes so much of it and returns to it so insistently in the histories, prophecies, and songs of the Bible — for the work of redemption is the great subject of the whole Bible, of its doctrines, promises, types, songs, histories, and prophecies.

2. From what has been said we can also see how God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. These are the titles Scripture frequently gives to God in passages that describe the course of events in God's providence. Isaiah 41:4: "Who has performed and accomplished it, calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last I am He.'" Scripture especially ascribes such titles to God when speaking of His providence as it relates to and is summed up in the great work of redemption — as in Isaiah 44:6-7 and Isaiah 48:12 with the surrounding context beginning at verse 9. God appears most eminently as the first and the last when we view the whole plan of divine providence as we have considered it — as all summing up in the one great work of redemption.

This is why, when Christ reveals to His disciple John the great future events of providence relating to His church, His people, and the whole affair of redemption to the end of the world, He repeatedly identifies Himself by this title. Revelation 1:8: "I am the

Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" And again in verses 10-11: "I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.'" Alpha and Omega are the names of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, just as A and Z are in ours — so this title means the same as being the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

God is addressed by this title at the beginning of Revelation, before the course of prophecy begins — and again at the end, after the entire course of events has been traced and the final outcome is in view. Revelation 21:6: "Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.'" And Revelation 22:12-13: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

We have seen how this is true in the course of everything I have laid before you. We have seen how things originated with God at the beginning — on what design God set the course of His providence in motion at the very start of human history — and we have seen how God has all along carried everything forward in keeping with those same purposes without ever failing. And at last, the conclusion and final outcome of all things is to God. We have seen how all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him — and so we may well cry out with the apostle in Romans 11:33: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" And verse 36: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

We have seen how other things came to an end one after another — how states, kingdoms, and empires fell and came to nothing, even the greatest and strongest of them. We have seen how the world has been overturned many times and will be more remarkably overturned than ever before. We have seen how the world comes to an end — how it was first destroyed by water and how at last it will be utterly destroyed by fire. And yet God remains the same through all ages. He existed before the beginning of this course of events and will remain after its end, as Psalm 102:25-26 declares. Thus God is the One who is, and who was, and who is to come.

We have seen in numerous ways how all other gods perish. We have seen how the ancient gods of the pagans in the nations around Canaan and throughout the Roman empire have all been destroyed and their worship long since overthrown. We have seen how Antichrist — who called himself God on earth — and Muhammad — who claimed religious honor — and all the gods of the pagans throughout the world will come to an end. And we have seen how Satan, the great dragon, that ancient serpent who set himself up as god of this world, will be cast into the lake of fire to receive his complete punishment. But the Lord remains, and His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion has no end. We have seen what mighty changes have swept through the world — but God is unchangeable: "the same yesterday and today and forever."

We began at the headwaters of the river of divine providence and have followed and traced it through all its windings and turns until we have reached its end and seen where it flows out. As it began in God, so it ends in God. God is the infinite ocean into which

it pours itself. Providence is like a mighty wheel whose rim reaches so high that it is awe-inspiring, with the glory of the God of Israel above it — as depicted in Ezekiel's vision. We have watched this wheel turn through its full revolution and seen how, as it came from God, so it has returned to God again. All the events of divine providence are like the links of a chain: the first link comes from God and the last link returns to Him.

3. From what has been said, we can see how Christ has preeminence in all things. This great work of redemption is entirely His work — He is the great Redeemer — and therefore, since the work of redemption is as it were the sum of all God's providential works, this displays the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ as the One who is above all, through all, and in all. That God intended the world for His Son's use in the work of redemption is one reason God created the world through Him — which the apostle seems to suggest in Ephesians 3:9-12. What has been said shows how all the purposes of God are purposed in Christ, and how He is before all things and above all things, how all things consist through Him and are governed by Him and are for Him (Colossians 1:15-18). We see from what has been said how God makes Him His firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth, and sets His throne above theirs. God has always upheld Christ's kingdom when the kingdoms of others have come to an end. His kingdom appears at last above all — however fiercely opposed for so many ages. In the end all other kingdoms fell, and His kingdom is the final kingdom, the one that never gives way to any other.

We see that whatever changes occur, and however high Christ's enemies exalt themselves, in the end all His enemies become His footstool, and He reigns with unchallenged power and immense

glory. In the end His people are all perfectly saved and made happy, and His enemies all become His footstool. In this way God gives the world to His Son as His inheritance.

4. From what has been said, we can see what a coherent whole divine providence is. Reflecting on what has been said can greatly help us see the consistency, order, and beauty of God's works of providence. If we look at the events of providence from any other angle than the one presented here, it will all appear as confusion — a jumble of events coming about without any order or pattern, like waves tossing on the sea. Things will appear as though one confused upheaval follows another, driven purely by blind chance, with no clear or definite end in view.

But when we consider the events of providence in the light in which they have been presented under this teaching — the light in which Scripture sets them before us — they appear far from confused. They form an orderly series of events, all wisely ordered and directed in excellent harmony and coherence, all moving toward one end. The wheels of providence are not driven by blind chance. As Ezekiel portrays, they are full of eyes all around and are guided by the Spirit of God. Where the Spirit goes, they go. And all God's works of providence across all ages converge at last in one point, as many lines meeting at a single center.

God's work of providence is like His work of creation: it is one single work. The events of providence are not many separate and independent acts — they are many different parts of one single work of providence, one consistent plan. God's works of providence are not disconnected and disordered but are all united, like the various parts of one building. There are many stones and many

pieces of timber, but they are all joined and fitted together so that they form one building. They all rest on one foundation and come together at last in one capstone.

God's providence might fittingly be compared to a large and long river with countless tributaries beginning in different regions at great distances from one another, all flowing toward one common destination. After running in very different and at times opposite directions for a while, they all draw closer and closer together as they approach their common end — and at last they all pour out together from one mouth into the same ocean. The different streams of this river naturally appear to be mere confusion because our sight is so limited — we cannot see from one tributary to another, and cannot see the whole at once so as to see how they are all united in one. A person who sees only one or two streams at a time cannot tell where their course is heading. Their path seems very crooked, and different streams appear to run in different and opposing directions for a time. If we observe from a distance, there seem to be countless obstacles in the way preventing them from ever uniting and reaching the ocean — rocks, mountains, and the like. And yet if we trace their full course, they all unite at last, all reach the same destination, all pouring out together into the same great ocean. Not one of all the streams fails to arrive there in the end.

5. From everything that has been said, we have strong grounds to conclude that the Scriptures are the word of God — because they alone tell us what God is doing, and what He is aiming at, in the works He is carrying out in the world. God is without question pursuing some design and executing some plan through the various changes and upheavals that have come to pass in the world from

age to age. It is entirely reasonable to conclude that there is one great design to which providence subordinates all the successive great changes in world affairs that God has brought about. It is reasonable to conclude that all the upheavals from the beginning of the world to the end are simply different parts of the same plan — all working together to bring about the great event that the great Creator and Ruler of the world has ultimately in view. And that plan will not be finished, nor the design fully accomplished, nor the great final event fully brought about, until the end of the world when the last revolution takes place.

Nothing else but the Holy Scriptures tells us what this plan and design of God is. Nothing else even attempts to set before us the whole plan of God's providential works from beginning to end — to inform us how all things came from God at the start, for what purpose they were made, how they were ordered from the beginning, how they will proceed to the end of the world, what they will come to at last, and how everything will conclude. Nothing else has any appearance of a coherent plan or direction in the revolutions God orders from age to age. Nothing else even claims to show what God is after in the things He has done, is doing, and will do — what He seeks and intends by them. Nothing else even attempts to explain with any clarity or certainty how the world began, or to give us the origin of things. Nothing but the Scriptures presents an orderly history of how God governed the world from the beginning of human history on earth — and nothing else presents an orderly prophecy of how He will govern it to the end. This matches the challenge God throws down to the false gods and prophets and teachers of the pagans in Isaiah 41:22-23: "Let them bring forward and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former

events, declare what they were, that we may consider them and know their outcome. Or announce to us what is coming;" "declare the things that are going to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods."

Reason itself shows that it is fitting and necessary for the intelligent rational beings of the world to know something of God's plan and design in His works — for they are beyond doubt the beings most directly concerned. Whatever God's great design is in His works, it surely concerns His rational creatures rather than animals and lifeless things. The revolutions through which God's great design is accomplished are revolutions primarily affecting rational beings and their condition — not the condition of things without life or reason. It is therefore fitting that rational creatures should know something of it — especially since reason itself teaches that God gave His rational creatures reason and the capacity to perceive Him in His works so that they might see His glory and give Him glory for it. But how can they see God's glory in His works if they do not know what His design in them is, and what He is aiming at in what He is doing in the world?

Furthermore, it is fitting that humanity should be informed of something about God's design in governing the world, because they are capable of actively aligning themselves with that design, promoting it, and acting in it as His friends and subjects. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that God has given humanity some revelation to inform them of this. And nothing else does this but the Bible. The Bible accomplishes it. From the Bible we can learn about the first origin of things, and an orderly account of God's works from the very beginning — through ages that lie beyond the reach of all other historical records. Here we are told

what God aims at in the whole, what the ultimate purpose is, how He has planned the great design He is pursuing, and what great things He intends to accomplish through all of it. Here we find a thoroughly rational and excellent account of this matter — one worthy of God, brilliantly displaying the glory of His perfections: His majesty, His wisdom, His glorious power, His grace and love, and His supremacy over all things — showing how He is the first and the last.

Here we are shown the connections between the various parts of God's work of providence, and how it all harmonizes and fits together in a consistent, beautiful, and glorious whole. In the Bible we have an account of the entire plan of providence — from the beginning of the world to the end — either in history or prophecy. We are told what everything will ultimately come to: how it will be concluded by a great day of judgment, issuing in the defeat of God's enemies and the salvation and glory of His church, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of His Son.

How rational, worthy, and excellent a revelation this is! And what an excellent book the Bible is — containing so much that goes beyond all other books in the world! And what evidence here that it truly is a divine book! It is a book that the great God has given to humanity for their instruction — without which we would be left in miserable darkness and confusion!

6. From what has been said, we can see the glorious majesty and power of God in this work of redemption — especially His glorious power. His power appears in sustaining His church for so long and carrying this work forward — often when the church was like a tiny spark of fire, or like smoldering flax in which the flame was nearly extinguished, with all the forces of earth and hell com-

bined to destroy it. Yet God has never allowed them to put it out, and He will ultimately bring justice forward to victory. God glorifies His strength through His church's weakness — causing His people, who are like a company of little children, to ultimately triumph over all of earth and hell, treading on the lion and the snake, trampling the young lion and the dragon underfoot. The glorious power of God appears in conquering His many powerful enemies through the One who was once an infant in a manger — who appeared as a poor, weak, despised man. He conquers them and triumphs over them with the very weapon they used against Him: the cross.

The glorious majesty of God appears in conquering all those powerful enemies of the church one age after another — in conquering Satan, that proud and mighty spirit, and all his demonic forces — in bringing him down under foot long after he had boasted himself as god of this world and done everything in his power to maintain his kingdom.

God's power appears gloriously in conquering Satan when Satan was at his peak in the strongest and most powerful pagan kingdom he ever had — the Roman empire. Christ our Michael overcame him, the devil was cast out, and no place was found for him in heaven anymore. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels with him. God's power also appears gloriously in conquering Satan in the kingdom where Satan's pride, cunning, and cruelty most fully show themselves — the kingdom of Antichrist. And it appears gloriously in defeating that greatest and most determined combined opposition of the devil and his followers against

Christ and His church — just before the fall of Antichrist — delivering a fatal blow to Satan's visible kingdom, after which a universal collapse follows across the entire world.

The glorious power of God appears in this repeated defeat of the devil — bringing him down time after time, after long periods in which the devil was given opportunity to strengthen himself to his full extent. This happened once when he was overthrown in his pagan Roman empire after strengthening himself there ever since the building of Babel. It will happen again in the even more thorough and universal overthrow of his kingdom across the entire world, after he was given yet another long opportunity to build up his strength through the two great kingdoms of Antichrist and Muhammad, and to establish his influence in the pagan world. We have seen how these kingdoms of God's enemies — which, before God acts, look so strong that their overthrow seems impossible — when God appears, melt away like fat before fire, and are swept away like chaff before a whirlwind, or like smoke pouring out a chimney.

Those mighty kingdoms of Antichrist and Muhammad, which have cut such a commanding figure for so many centuries and have trampled the world underfoot, will vanish like a shadow when God appears — fading away almost on their own, like darkness in a room when a light is brought in. What are God's enemies in His hands? How does their greatest strength become weakness when He rises up! And how feeble will they all appear together at the day of judgment! We may apply to all of this the words of the Song of Moses in Exodus 15:6: "Your right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy." How great does the majesty of God appear in overturning the world again and

again to accomplish His purposes — and at last in causing the earth and heavens to flee away before the advancement of the glory of His kingdom!

7. From what has been said, we can see the glorious wisdom of God. It shows God's wisdom in creating the world that He created it for such an excellent purpose — to accomplish within it such a glorious work. It shows the wisdom of divine providence that He brings such great good out of such great evil — making the fall and ruin of humanity, which in itself is so sorrowful and tragic, the occasion for accomplishing such a glorious work as this work of redemption. Out of it He has raised a glorious structure whose top reaches to heaven and brought His elect into a state of unspeakable happiness. How gloriously God's wisdom appears in that long course and series of great changes in the world — in bringing such order out of confusion, in so completely foiling the devil, in so wonderfully turning all his most cunning schemes into occasions for God's own glory and the glory of His Son Jesus Christ, and in causing the very greatest works of Satan — the ones in which he glorified himself most — to become occasions of all the more glorious triumph for Jesus Christ. How wonderful is God's wisdom in bringing all these countless changes and upheavals in the world to such a glorious conclusion — directing all the wheels of providence with such skill that every single one of them works together, like the many wheels of a finely crafted machine, to produce at last such an excellent outcome: such a display of divine glory, such happiness for His people, and such a glorious and everlasting kingdom for His Son!

8. From what has been said, we can see the steadiness of God's mercy and faithfulness to His people — how He never abandons His inheritance and never forgets His covenant with them across all generations. Now we can see the full weight of the words of the text: "The moth will eat them like a garment and the worm will eat them like wool, but My righteousness will be forever and My salvation to all generations." Now we can see abundant reason for the name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'" — meaning: I am the same as I was when I entered into covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will always be the same. I will keep my covenant forever. I am self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and unchanging.

We can now see the truth of Psalm 36:5-6: "Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep." Reflecting on what has been said, we need not wonder that the psalmist in Psalm 136 so repeatedly returns to the refrain "for His lovingkindness is everlasting" — as though he were overcome with wonder at the enduring nature of God's mercy to His church, delighting to dwell on it and unable to stop expressing it. Let us with the same pleasure and joy celebrate the everlasting mercy and faithfulness of God to His church and people. Let us be comforted by it in the present dark circumstances of the church, amid all the upheaval and confusion in the world and all the threats from the church's enemies. Let it stir us to pray with earnest faith for those glorious things God has promised to accomplish for His church.

9. From what has been said, we can see what a blessed society the church of Christ is. All this great work is done for them. Christ undertook it for their sake, and for their sake He carries it on from the fall of humanity to the end of the world — because He has loved them with an everlasting love. For their sake He overturns states and kingdoms. For their sake He shakes heaven and earth. He gives up whole nations for them, peoples in exchange for their lives. Because they are precious in God's sight, they have been honored — and so He first gives the blood of His own Son for them, and then for their sake offers up the blood of all their enemies, many thousands and millions, all the nations that stand in their way, as a sacrifice for their good.

For their sake He made the world, and for their sake He will destroy it. For their sake He built heaven, and for their sake He makes His angels ministering spirits. This is why the apostle says what he does in 1 Corinthians 3:21 and following: "All things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you." How blessed are this people — redeemed from among humanity, firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, who have God in every age for their protection and help! Deuteronomy 33:29: "Blessed are you, O Israel; who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places."

No matter who prevails now, no matter how high the enemies of the church exalt themselves — these are the people who will finally prevail. The final kingdom will ultimately be theirs. The kingdom will at last be given into their hands and not left to others. We

have seen what a blessed outcome things will finally reach for them, what glory they will arrive at and remain in possession of forever — after all the kingdoms of the world have come to an end, the earth has been removed, the mountains have been carried into the depths, and this lower earth has been entirely dissolved. O happy people, and blessed society! How fitting that they should spend eternity in praise and worship of the One who loved them from eternity and will love them through eternity.

10. Finally, from what has been said, all wicked people — all who are without Christ — may see their extreme misery. If you are among them — whoever you are — you have no part or share in any of this. None of the things you have heard benefit you in the least. Indeed, your guilt is all the greater, and the misery you are exposed to all the more dreadful. You are among those against whom God, in advancing this work, exercises such plain and manifest wrath — among those enemies who are liable to be made Christ's footstool, to be ruled with a rod of iron, to be shattered to pieces. You are among the seed of the serpent, whose defeat is one of the great purposes of this entire work. Whatever glorious things God accomplishes for His church, if you remain in the condition you are in now, they will not be glorious for you. The most glorious times for the church are always the most dreadful times for the wicked and unrepentant. This is what Isaiah 66:14 teaches. And so we find it throughout Scripture: wherever glorious things are foretold for the church, terrible things are foretold for the wicked who are its enemies. And so it has always proved in history: in every remarkable deliverance for the church, there has been a remarkable outpouring of wrath on its enemies. When God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, He poured out remarkable judgment on

Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the same time. When He brought them into Canaan through Joshua and gave them that good land, He executed remarkable judgment on the Canaanites. When they were delivered from Babylonian captivity, striking vengeance was inflicted on the Babylonians. When the Gentiles were called and God's elect were saved through the apostles' preaching, Jerusalem and the persecuting Jews were destroyed in the most awful manner. The same pattern held in the glory accomplished for the church in the days of Constantine, at the overthrow of Satan's visible kingdom in the fall of Antichrist, and will hold at the day of judgment. In all these instances — and especially the last — there have been, or will be, the most terrible displays of divine wrath against the wicked. And to that class of people you belong:

You are indeed among those God will make use of in this work — but it will be for the glory of His justice, not of His mercy. You are among those enemies of God reserved for the display of Christ's glorious power in overcoming and punishing them. You are among those who will be consumed along with this cursed world after the day of judgment, when Christ and His church will triumphantly and gloriously ascend to heaven.

Therefore let all who are without Christ among us seriously take these things to heart, and not be like the foolish people of the ancient world who refused to take warning when Noah told them that the Lord was about to bring a flood of waters upon the earth. Nor like the people of Sodom, who paid no attention when Lot told them that God would destroy that city, and who would not flee from the coming wrath — and were consumed in that terrible destruction.

I will conclude my entire study of this subject with words like those at the close of Revelation: "These words are faithful and true. Blessed is he who heeds the words of this book." "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying." "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.'" "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

THANKS FOR READING



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