

## ATTAINING THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT

Our meeting this morning has to do with the state of our minds. For this reason it is, in the eyes of many people of very little importance. The state of our minds, they think, is an affair of sentiment and fancy that may well be left to take care of itself. If it were a question of the state of our pocket or the state of our business, they would consider that a matter of real importance. Yet even in temporal things, the state of the mind is of the very first importance. In fact, it is the state of mind that constitutes the difference between one man and another. On the street, one man goes one way and one man another. Why? Because of a difference in mind. One has one set of impressions that takes him to a warehouse, a workshop, or bank, or counting house, as the case may be. When you want a job done, you send for a man who has a peculiar state of mind qualifying him for the same. That state of mind enables him to do what you want, and with another state of mind, he would be of no use to you. A chemist could not put your drains right because his mind has no acquaintance in that direction. It is the mind that guides the hands; state of mind is, therefore, all-important even in common things. See how important it is in another way. State of mind in another has just everything to do with whether you love them or regard them with aversion. If they are of an excellent mind, you love them; if of an evil mind, you may be kind to them and refrain from rendering to them according to their evil but you cannot love them in the way you love those who are excellent. How important then to that person is the state of his mind. Who is there that does not like to be loved? There is probably not a living person who is indifferent on this head. So important, then, is the state of our minds—even in common ways. But these may be considered poor comparisons for the subject in hand. So they are, but they are stepping stones. They have to do with what men think of each other, whereas our meeting has to do with what God thinks of us. The object of the meeting is to bring or keep us in that state of mind that would be acceptable to Him. There is a state of mind acceptable to Him, and there is a state of mind the reverse. What these are we can only know from what is revealed. This revelation is very plain.

*“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him—in those that hope in His mercy.”*

*“The Lord taketh not pleasure in fools.”*

*“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”*

*“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word.”*

The concrete form of these abstract declarations in our day would be this: the Lord loves those who heartily believe the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and ardently desire the promised salvation, and who, having attained to a knowledge of the will of God, are anxious on the subject of conforming to it in all particulars. Now, what is it that brings men to this state of mind? What is it that imparts motives in these directions? It is that which moves men in everything: facts—the knowledge of facts. This is the moving spring of all human action. Examine the conduct of men in every relation of life, and you will find this to be true. If a man emigrates, it is because he has heard of the fact of another country, and what may be realised there. If a man persevere in any settled line of business, it is because he knows certain results of value to him will come out of that line of action.

What knowledge, then, is it, that leads men to fear God and hope in his purpose and to conform to His commandments? It is the knowledge of facts. Our meeting brings us into renewed contact with the facts, and these make their own impressions and produce their own results. They are facts of the past which men are liable to forget, but which have lost none of their reality by reason of being out of our sight. Our readings of selections from the

Scriptures keep these facts before us—sometimes in one form and sometimes another, but always facts, and all supporting one another. The Bible itself is the first and most wonderful of all contemporary facts. For want of a constant acquaintance with this, men are liable to drift into forgetfulness that there is such a thing as a Bible in existence, except in a hazy way. Our habit of methodical reading prevents this forgetfulness. The Bible is always before us in the exhibition of the wise and perfect and beautiful ways of God.

The chapters read on a particular day may be considered as windows through which we look at some section of the busy past, with reviving effects to our minds. In our first, it is Daniel we are with—Daniel in the act of receiving prophecy; for Daniel was a prophet, as believers in Christ are bound to recognise. This 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Daniel that has been read would be dry reading from the point of view of popular theology. What use could be made of it? The question is answered by the fact that it is never used in popular religious exercises. How different it is from the point of view of a scriptural enlightenment. It is deeply interesting and highly profitable. First of all, there is the fact that it is a prophecy. Anybody can see this at a glance. It is all “shall,” “shall” throughout, as to movements of kings and armies. Next, it is prophecy that has since been fulfilled in so remarkable a way that the enemies of the Bible have invented the supposition that the prophecy was written after the things had happened, and by some one who had the history before him. It is a foolish hypothesis whichever way you consider it, for it is very certain that anyone knowing the facts at the time he wrote them as prophecy, would have been much more circumstantial in his foreshadowings. He would have given us the names of the kings. We should have had Alexander the Great to start with, and the names of his four successors, Cassander, Lysimachus, etc., among whom his dominion was divided, and we should have read about Ptolemy Philadelphus, and Euergetes, and Antiochus Epiphanes, and the rest. Instead of this, it is merely the impersonal “*King of the South*,” or “*King of the North*,” all the way through as befits the dignity of divine condescension to human ways. Then how foolish it is to suppose that a pretended prophecy of Daniel could have been palmed upon the Jewish nation. The book of Daniel was in their hands in the time of Christ. The priesthood were the custodians of the Scriptures, and of this as a part. That priesthood had existed in an unbroken line since the return from Babylon the year after Daniel’s death. How impossible it must seem on reflection that a false book of Daniel could have been foisted upon them at any part of that line. How impossible that a book recognised by Christ could be an imposture. Christ is the key of the position in many ways. His resurrection settles all, though his character is sufficient even without that. The prophecy is specially interesting in this way, that it not only brings with it, in its past fulfilment, the pledge that God is at work in the matter, but it comes down to our own day, and goes beyond us to the resurrection and the Kingdom of God. The circumstances attending its communication greatly add to its force and interest. It was given to Daniel in Babylon during the last year of his life. Daniel had risen to great importance in Babylon. He had been taken to that country as a captive about 70 years previously, when Nebuchadnezzar had successfully besieged Jerusalem. As a member of the royal family, he was early taken notice of in high quarters. His recital and interpretation of the image dream which Nebuchadnezzar himself had forgotten, led to his high promotion, for—

*“The king made Daniel a great man and gave him many great gifts and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon.”*

For a long time he retained this high position, which a variety of incidents helped to strengthen him in. But at no time did he withdraw his desires from the land and city, from which he had been carried away captive at the beginning of his career, and which had finally been laid in smoking desolation. He was of those of whom we read in the Psalms:

*“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down: yea, we wept when we thought of Zion . . . If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”*

Those who know the Truth understand why Daniel should feel like this. It is not what is called “patriotism” though no doubt an ingredient of natural affection was in it. God has chosen Zion as the seat of His authority and the radiating point of His wisdom and power. Abraham came to it originally from the very country to which Daniel was taken captive.

*“He looked for a city (there) having foundations,”* and therefore, by faith *“sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country” (Heb. 11:9).*

His descendants in Egypt, under Moses, sang on the shores of the Red Sea, on the morrow of the Egyptian overthrow;

*“Thou shalt bring them in and plant them on the mountain of Thine inheritance; in the place O Lord, which thou hast made for Thee to dwell in.”*

Jerusalem and the Holy Land were therefore much more to Daniel than his native country. They were identified with the purpose of God. They were associated with *“the exceeding great and precious promises.”* Babylon’s power and prosperity were an oppression to him; Judah’s desolation and downtreading were a distress. It was therefore a natural desire and petition with him in Babylon that God should return in favour to Zion—the more especially as he understood from the reading of Jeremiah the prophet that in seventy years from its commencement, God would end the Jewish captivity and restore His people to the land of their fathers (Dan. 9:2). With these feelings he set himself *“to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.”* He confessed Israel’s sin and said—

*“I beseech thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do. Defer not for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.”*

The answer which he received enlightened Daniel to his grief on one point, namely, that though the restoration would take place—(*“the restoring and building of Jerusalem”*)—in accordance with the Word to Jeremiah, yet it would only be a transient gleam of prosperity, and would be followed by increase of corruption in Israel, bringing with it the putting to death of the Messiah when he should appear, and another overthrow of the Jewish state, and an indefinite prolongation of desolation and darkness. In this distressing prospect, Daniel *“set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before God” (Dan. 10:12).* What should be the end of these things? It was in response to these several mental exercises that the prophecy outlined in chapters 10 and 11 was sent to Daniel, *“to make him understand what should befall his people in the latter days” (v. 14).* *“The vision”* said the angel, *“is for many days,”* and so it has proved, even for over 2,300 years, as specified in the ram and goat vision of chapter 8. The angel begins right where events were at the moment of his communication (ch. 11:2).

*“Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.”*

The outline of futurity is conducted to *“the time of the end”* at v. 40. Then we have the events of this time described, including the one feature that was of engrossing interest to Daniel,

*“At that time shall thy people be delivered.”*

Now what was of engrossing interest to Daniel is of engrossing interest to us, for the people of God are one, and those who do not find their interest active in this direction have cause to doubt if they have part or lot in the purpose of God. The identity of the hope of believers with the matters communicated to Daniel is shown by the statement immediately added:

*“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”*

Thus the resurrection and the setting up of the Kingdom of God are the upshot of the long prophecy shown to him. Now, that prophecy has been so completely fulfilled in the history of the world (as has also that other prophecy in the Apocalypse sent to John in Patmos, and embracing the Christian era from that time till now), that we have the strongest ground for confidence concerning the finish. What stronger pledge could we have than a 3,000 years’ run of fulfilled prophecy? For prophecy goes back far before the days of Daniel—back indeed to Abraham’s time, which would give us about 3,700 years of this wonderful experience. Let us hold fast our confidence then without wavering, for He is faithful who has promised. The events of our own day show that we are on the verge of the consummation. The dense cloud masses that overhang the political sky; the unparalleled state of armament among the nations; the heavy swell of the democratic sea, and the roar of its breakers on every strand; the impotence of the beast and his image to touch the hair of a single saint against whose community they made deadly war in past times; the utter sickliness unto death of the Euphratean power whose waters contract themselves into narrower and narrower channels with every upheaval of events; the consolidation of Britain’s power in Egypt and the Mediterranean; the commenced revival of the Holy Land and people and the intense watchfulness of a scripturally-enlightened class throughout the world, who ardently desire the promised thief-like advent of the Son of Man—all these things tell us plainly that the end is at hand, and that God is about to perform His long-promised work of deliverance on behalf of the whole house of Israel, of which Jesus and his brethren are the true kernel. How misguided are those who may allow themselves from any cause to drop out of the position of watchfulness and faithfulness. The cares and pleasures of this life, it is long since Christ warned us against them, and they have not lost their dangerous power. The quarrels of brethren are on the same evil list.

*“Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”*

These are the apostle’s words. Wise men remember them and leave off meddling. The love of many may wax cold. Disputations may rage and blight among *“lovers of debate and despisers of those that are good.”* But wise men will hold themselves aloof, in the loving service and patient waiting for Christ, knowing that the present hour will soon have vanished and return no more, while beyond lies the day of peace and holiness and love and life and joy for ever.

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By Bro Robert Roberts