

The Threshing Floor

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Will you turn to several passages of the Word:

"... whose fan is in His hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and He will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

"And when they came to the threshing-floor of Nachon, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:6,7).

"And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was about to destroy, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the destroying angel, It is enough; now stay thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (1 Chronicles 21:15).

"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat? saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:28).

It is impressive that so many turning-points, or crises, in the Bible, had threshing-floors as their basis; we have noted one or two of these; and they were turning-points.

As you know, in the first, David was now being brought to the throne, according to the Word of the Lord and the anointing, moving up to Jerusalem. Saul was dead. David would bring the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. It was a turning-point, and a very vital one, in the history of God's goings with His people.

In the second place, the Temple was about to come in, that great symbolic representation of the House of God was now immediately in view, and the whole thing turned upon this threshing-floor; for that very threshing-floor of Ornan became the site of the Temple. It is a very big development in the goings of God.

In the case of the passage in Jeremiah, this is a tremendous crisis, because it is the doom of the false prophets, who had led the people of God so far astray as to make their exile and captivity necessary. The Lord speaks of their word as 'chaff', as 'straw', and makes this great difference by this question: What is the wheat to the chaff? It is a big turning-point in the spiritual life of God's people.

All this comes to the threshing-floor. We know the general purpose and action of a threshing-floor, or, as in these days, a threshing-machine; we know what it means, what it represents.

In the first place, it speaks of *discrimination* and *separation*; discrimination between the true and the false, and the action of separating those two things. You look at all these passages that we have mentioned, you will see that that is what is in view — making this necessary discrimination between what is true and what is not true; what is *the* thing, and what is not the thing; and, in so discriminating, putting things in their right place, their right category. 'That belongs there; and this belongs here; and these two things are different, altogether different; they belong to two different realms.' That is the first action and meaning of 'threshing'; it is taking up the whole matter of the difference between what looks to be but is not, and what really is. God might write over the door of any threshing-floor or threshing room, or inscribe upon any threshing instrument, just one

word — *reality*! That is the effect: to secure reality; to establish reality; and to deliver reality from all make-believe and all falsehood; between appearances, what looks like it, but is not it; between the merely outward and what is really inward. That is what goes on at a threshing-floor. Or again, between what is just flimsy, and will not be able to stand up to any adverse winds, and what is substantial and will be able to abide the test. Of course, in the East right to this day, it is a very simple form of threshing. The threshing floor is placed in some position where there is a draught, where the wind blows, or where they can make a wind — an open space, exposed to the elements. Then, with this simple 'fan', like a carpet-beater with prongs, the whole thing is beaten and thrown into the air, and away in the wind goes the chaff, and the solid corn falls to the ground, and heaps up. Now, of course, modern methods are different, but the effect is the same. It is to let go what can go; to get rid of what cannot stand up to the elements, and to secure that which is substantial.

Dear friends, the Lord lets His wind blow on us all. Threshing is not a soft and kind thing; it may be very hard; it may seem very cruel; but you all agree that it is very necessary. Supposing what you eat that is made of wheat, had never been separated from the chaff! There would be a lot of trouble, wouldn't there, with the shopkeeper. Indeed, you would complain; you would ask: Why has this not been properly threshed? Why has this been allowed to come in like this? Oh yes, we all agree that it is a very necessary thing; it is essential. But it is a hard thing; it is a painful thing, this beating out, this exposing to the elements, this carrying away of much, this reducing to solid reality. But we will say, It is right; it is necessary. We know, as to ourselves, that there is a lot that cannot pass with God, that cannot stand. We don't want it to stand; we want it to go; but we know there is a great deal that is like 'chaff' in our lives; perhaps 'make-believe', 'appearance', flimsy, unreal. We don't know how true that is until we get on to the divine threshing-floor, and begin to discover how much reality there is in us. We sometimes wonder if there is going to be anything remaining at all, but the Lord knows. And it is a very necessary thing for us individually, and for us as a company of the Lord's people, from time to time. We would not like it to be 'year by year', every year, as in nature; but it is a recurrent thing. The Lord from time to time brings everything to the threshing-floor, and there, through a painful ordeal, He begins to get down to this matter of *reality*.

Many questions begin to arise: How did we come to be where we are? Is it a solid background or foundation to where we are? How much of what we think we have do we really have? How much of all that we have received of teaching, and what not, is our very life, and able to carry us through in times of adversity? The adversity is allowed to find that out. But whatever may be the effect, or, however many may be the effects, God is after one thing, and we will agree with Him: everything must be real, one hundred per cent real, not wrapped up in some husk of profession, pretence, unreality, mere form, mere teaching, as teaching. It may be a small corn, but it is a corn — it is REAL! And the Lord is reducing to that.

And so it is said of the Lord Jesus: "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor.*"

Now, in these instances that we have cited, it is very evident that there was this confusion, and this misting up of things, that the Lord was not going to tolerate. I say again, it is impressive that the issues were settled at 'threshing-floors'. Take this matter of the 'bringing the ark to Jerusalem', bringing the testimony to its divinely chosen and appointed place; bringing it to the end of its journey and getting it established. Take note of all that: The Testimony of God, where it ought to be, and there settled, so that they can draw out the staves, the symbols of progress; and reach finality over this matter. David attempts to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, but David had spent some time, some months, in the Philistine country, by failure in faith. David said: 'I shall one day die by the hand of Saul; it is best for me to escape to the Philistines'. Although anointed, he broke down under pressure, and went and dwelt in the land of the Philistines; and there

he saw how the Philistines did things. Among the many things that the Philistines did, was to make carts, to make machines. When they captured this Ark, and eventually, having suffered so much because of it, they sent it back; they made a new cart and put the Ark on it. David knew something about Philistine machinery, the ways of the world. He came back; and when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem, he made a new cart, and put the Ark on it. Disastrous consequences! We know that, in the end, discrimination came home to his heart as he looked at the Word of God, and eventually he said: The Levites ought to bear the Ark of God. The difference between a merely mechanical contrivance, worldly machinery, worldly methods, organisation according to the business standards of this world — the difference between all that of the natural, uncircumcised mind of the Philistines — and living men, Levites, whose very origin is the blood. Their very life is the blood; their very service is the blood. They are living men, who, by the blood have been cut off from all that natural way of going on. They are circumcised with the cross of Jesus Christ. God is very particular about His spiritual principles in all ages. So, when they reached the threshing-floor of Nachon, no wonder it was that the oxen stumbled! The whole thing broke down; the procession was stopped; the Ark was turned aside; for many months it remained there until the lesson was learned. What is the chaff to the wheat? The Lord will not have this sort of thing: a mixture of the world in the life of His people; the methods of this world, mere machinery, to carry on His testimony. No! The whole thing will come to a standstill in confusion till we have established this thing: God's testimony must be in the lives of living men! Everybody related to this Testimony of God must be *livingly*, as a person, related to it.

There is one other thing that, of course, arises out of this: *'Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of the ark.'* Dear friends, it can be fatal to become too familiar with holy things! It can be disastrous for the holy and sacred things of God to become so common-place, cheap, that you and I can take charge of them, manipulate them, have that kind of familiar association. Well, Uzzah learned that you cannot do that; and all Israel learned that you cannot do that. It sounds hard, does it not; one does not like talking in this way, but the 'threshing-floor' is like that. And it is necessary.

Later the Ark is in Jerusalem, on right grounds, by right methods and means; and now everything is established, and Israel is in blessing and prosperity, and growing and expanding. And it says, *'Satan stood up against Israel.'* Satan stood up against Israel, of course, with the object of destroying Israel with the Testimony. And how did he do it? He moved David to number the people. What did that mean? Oh, for David to take a census in order to say: Oh, what a marvellously great nation we have, and I am king over such a people! Look at this wonderful thing! You can almost hear Nebuchadnezzar saying: See this great Babylon that I have built! Ah, Satan, coming back from before times eternal, where he said, I will exalt my throne above the clouds! The pride of self-exaltation; the pride of self-gratification; boasting in things. This is just the complete opposite of humble, meek, conscious dependence upon God however great the thing may have become, however extensive it may be, however much blessing God may have given. We must never lose the deep sense of absolute dependence upon Him. Satan is the embodiment of independence of God. God will not have that. If He hurled Satan from Heaven because of that, He is not going to allow a man on earth to become governed by that spirit. And so, the terrible plague passed over the land, mowing the people down by their thousands, reducing this whole thing. The turning-point was at the 'threshing-floor of Ornan'. You see, the judgment of the proud flesh, independent, glorying in things. When that has been settled, there is a way for the House of God, because the House of God can contain none of that. It is the place of dependence upon God; the embodiment, the house of the meekness of Jesus Christ. It is a 'threshing-floor' that settles that issue. The Lord does bring us to the 'threshing-floor' if at any time we are in danger of boasting in things, and ceasing to be dependent, wholly, utterly and consciously dependent upon Himself. No pride can come into the House of God. We all agree with that. And so a 'threshing-floor' must deal with anything like that.

Well, I think you see the point from these instances and illustrations, and that could be carried into many other realms. If it were necessary and there were time to do it, we should see from the Word of God, how again and again the Lord just stepped in, and said: Look here, we are getting confused a bit; we are getting mixed up; things are not just as clear and transparent and single as I would have them; we must do something about this. And then He brings His winds to blow. And they are very devastating winds, devastating to all that is not of God, but complementary to that deep, that true work of God. The Lord is not ever on destructive lines, on negative lines; He is always for the positive. If you are having a bad time; if you are on the threshing-floor, and the Lord seems to be dealing with a lot, and you are beginning to wonder if there is anything that is going to remain at all, do remember that the Lord is not after your destruction, your annihilation, to finish up everything. The Lord is after something solid to establish you; really to get that which will go right through. Oh, that is the point, dear friends, the Lord is after the thing that will stand, will remain; to get rid of just everything that will not do that, whatever it may be. We have all gone that way. We have learned, we have got a lot, perhaps, by birth, been born into Christianity, perhaps a Christian home. We have got a lot from our association with Christian things; we may have come into a realm of much Christian teaching. All that, but that does not mean that the whole thing is really true in you or in me because of that; the Lord is going to put that to the test from time to time. It is a very necessary work.

Here it is: it is only that which is really worthless that will be destroyed; the wheat will He gather, store, in His garner. He is after wheat. That is what He is after; having in you and in me the thing that abides. May we have grace! He will not always keep us on the threshing-floor, as Isaiah says. Isaiah says: 'Bread corn is bruised, but He will not always be bruising it.' There are times when it is like that, and they seem to be long-drawn-out, I know; and we wonder if we are ever coming off the threshing-floor. But, in the order of nature, that is only one part of the whole of the course of the year, is it not? And in grace it is the same. It is a thing that has to be done. It has its place; it has its time; if it effects its purpose, it will pass. It may come back again later on when it is necessary, but He will not always be threshing!