



the
**Golden
Candlestick**

FEATURES OF ZION

Part 2

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THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

Reading: 1 Cor. 3:10-17; 1 Pet. 2:6-7; Rev. 21:19.

My first word, reverting to the matter of Christ as the foundation, will be a corrective word. We must be very clear and very sure as to what it is we are here for, and what it is we are after. There may come to us great blessing and enrichment along the line of enlarging revelation of the things of the Lord. These may make a great impression upon us as being very wonderful, very rich, very full of suggestion, with the result that we find ourselves beginning to talk a great deal about these things that have come to our recognition, our knowledge, things that we would say have been shown to us or have been revealed to us. Slowly we are drawn into the way of speaking about truth and light and revelation in certain terms, with a certain phraseology and a certain association, and before we know where we are, we have become people of a certain kind of teaching, a certain form of teaching, of teaching couched in certain phrases and a certain language, and we cannot but relate that to where we got it. Do you see what is happening? Some *thing* is being constituted, and that is accompanied by many perils, many dangers, and sooner or later we find it working out not so much to good as almost to bad. As we have said before, it can so easily become a divisive thing, a separating thing, a thing marking off lines of distinction between those who have this light and this knowledge and this kind of teaching, and those who have not got it. We can hardly avoid making distinctions, it is just the way of things.

Now, it is not unnecessary to say this. It is very necessary that we here today should look this straight and fully in the face and just get ourselves clear on the matter. Why are we here? Why are we here on the earth as Christians? What are we after? What is our business? What is Christianity all about from start to finish? For every fragment of light and revelation, from the most early beginnings through all the stages of enlargement and increase to however full a measure there may be at the end, has to do with one thing and one thing only, and if that is not the result of apprehension of truth, of knowledge, of light, teaching, then we are putting up a false building and everything again is in a

realm of falsehood, artificiality, unreality. What is it that we are here for and that we are after?

Christians on the Earth to Reveal Christ

Well, as I see it, the Word of God has only one thing to say in answer to such a question, and that is the revelation, the manifestation, of Jesus Christ; that the Lord Jesus should be seen, should be manifested, should be here in very truth, that all can see Him, and all can know Him. You say, that is almost like an anticlimax to all that you have been leading up to. We expected something much more than that. No, that is just it, and, if I am not mistaken, the longer you go on as Christians, the older you get, the more you know, the more you come to dread any kind of teaching or any amount of teaching that does not result in a very real knowledge and expression of the Lord Jesus. That is, you will feel more and more unable just to be content with teaching. Because of the serious demands and the intensifying difficulty, the growing pressure, the discipline, you will constantly and growingly feel: Yes, but what is it all about after all, where does it lead us to, what does this represent of value for life? And we know very well, do we not, that it is only the Lord Himself who can meet our need, who can really stand up to all that which comes upon us, the Lord Himself, and we have to come back constantly to this: Oh no, it is not the measure, the degree, the kind, the form, the nature, of our teaching, our truth, our way of speaking, our interpretation, our language. It is not that. It is the presence and the manifestation of the Lord Jesus commensurate with it all. Do these two things keep in even balance? Or are the ideas, thoughts, the great things of the mind something very wonderful in themselves and very wonderful as we contemplate them, yet are apart from the real everyday manifestation of the Lord and knowledge of the Lord? Are the people who think they have more light and more revelation than perhaps others have, really manifesting commensurately more of the Lord Jesus than others? That is the question. That is the deciding point and factor in everything. If you or I claim to have more light, more revelation — *God forbid* that we should ever make claims like that! — but if we should think that it is so, the proof and the value is — do people see more of Christ in us than others? For God never moves beyond his Son, He never moves to theories or teachings or doctrines or things that we call revelations. He only keeps within the compass of His living Son in manifestation. Do you understand what I have been trying to say? It is very simple and very foundational. It is the measure of the manifestation, the seen, recognized presence, of the Lord Jesus — whether His presence is liked or not, that is another matter. His presence may rouse a great deal of antagonism and hostility or it may answer to the quest of many hearts. The effect, one way or the other, is

consequent upon His presence, His being recognized, and it is just how much we are manifesting of the Lord Jesus; after all our teachings and our conferences and our meetings, how much we are manifesting of the Lord Jesus, how much He is found in us. That is the deciding factor on the value of everything. So the mark of testimony is not what we call ‘the testimony’, which for so many has come to mean a certain form and compass of teaching. No, the mark of testimony is Christ Himself manifested in a living way. That is the word of correction with which we begin.

We are led by that to these foundations again, or to this foundation which is many-sided. The foundations in Revelation are many-sided, but the foundation is one, it is Christ in His many-sidedness. Here in the Revelation it is all manner of precious stones. Peter says, “*For you therefore that believe is the preciousness*” (1 Pet. 2:7). So the foundation which is to give its nature and character to everything that is put upon it, that is built upon it, that rests upon it, is the multiple preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

The Preciousness of Christ to the Father

Now, that preciousness is His preciousness to the Father, in the first place. “*Behold, I (that is God speaking) lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious*” (1 Pet. 2:6). If we were to investigate the preciousness of Christ to God of course we should come very clearly to the conclusion that what is precious to God is that which answers to His own nature, that without which God cannot do, that which is to Him the thing He just must have. It is precious because it is indispensable to God, and if we looked at that which is indispensable to God, we should find that it is the constituents of His own nature. By contrast, we should see what God hates, what He casts away, rejects as refuse, then we should see what is precious to God. We have said that pride is an abomination to God, something cast out. Then what is precious to God is meekness, humility. Peter says “*the incorruptible apparel (ornament, A.V.) of a meek and quiet spirit ... is in the sight of God of great price*” (1 Pet. 3:4), precious. That is a virtue of Christ — meekness, a contrast to pride. So we should go on, but we are not going to take up these precious stones one by one.

Christ’s Preciousness Ours Through Faith

We take up the word ‘preciousness’ and say, this being the foundation, that what Christ is to God in the satisfying of His own nature and all His divine and holy requirements becomes ours through faith. “*For you ... that believe is the preciousness*”, the manifestation of the beauties and the glories of the Lord Jesus. Oh, do try to free your mind from this being some sort of an address on a

subject, do try to realize this, that this is not something for a meeting, for a conference or for our times of instruction in the Word! This is something that has to go with us tomorrow and the day after, where we are in homes, dealing with the everyday people in life, in business, out in the streets, in our journeys. It is there every day that the beauties, the excellencies, of the Lord Jesus must be in manifestation. It is not what we preach, it is not that we are preachers giving subjects, but behind the preaching, behind the teaching, meeting with us, in the work day by day alongside of others, there is possible the discernment, the registration of Christ — though people may not know what it is. There is something of the beauty of the Lord our God resting upon us, something that speaks of Christ. It is no use our preaching about God's thought and desires if people find us wrangling and awkward and difficult and discontented and so on. It is Christ, the beauties of Christ, the preciousness of Christ to the Father which is the foundation, and all that is put on the foundation must correspond to it, otherwise it is going to be put in the fire, and there will be nothing left.

You see the glories of Christ. Let us ask the Lord to create in us a passionate ambition to express the Lord Jesus more than anything else. Not to preach great truths, or to be preachers, teachers, anything like that as such, but to express the Lord Jesus, that out of Himself, His own presence, His own measure, His own nature, our opportunities for preaching, if we are going to preach at all, will come, not because we can talk, but because it is known that we have something of the Lord. Do not let us live too much in the upper stories of the house of God. The house of God is one, and it has a basement and it has a kitchen. We do not want to always live up on the top flat, so heavenly, so spiritual, so abstract, so high up in truth that the practical things of the kitchen are left unattended to. What would you say if you went into a house and were taken upstairs and shown a very glorious, wonderfully adorned upper flat, and then somehow you managed to get down to the kitchen and found the most awful filthy mess, out of all consistency with what you found upstairs. You say, there is something wrong here, this does not tally. There is the kitchen aspect of the spiritual life: all those practical, everyday, humdrum things where the beauty of the Lord must be seen, just as much as up there in the heavenlies in Christ. Do not let us live exclusively up there. We must live down here. That is what the Word of God does. That is what Paul did in his Ephesian letter. He wrote half of it about the heavenlies, then, without breaking it into chapters, he went straight on with his letter: "*I ... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called*", and then — husbands, wives, children, parents, masters, mistresses, servants — that is coming down to the kitchen, bringing the glory of heaven with you. It is a very important side of things. Preciousness must be found down here. "*As in heaven, so on earth*" (Matt. 6:10). Do not let us be people who are so occupied with high-up things that we think it beneath

our dignity for such ‘spiritual’(?) people to light the fire and wash the dishes and clean the room and so on. We may think that is not our job — we are more spiritual than that! There is nothing that displeases the Lord more than people coming to meetings and neglecting their homes, and thinking it is another realm. It is not; it is this realm. The highest thing that you can know is the manifestation of Christ, and that is perhaps more tested in those monotonous, everyday, humdrum things of standing in queues and all that sort of thing. Yes, but Christ is still there; not two worlds, the same world. Oh, forgive this, if it needs forgiving, for its simplicity. We must bring everything up to a high level. What I am trying to say is, do not be people of high ideas, great conceptions of truth, divorced from a practical presentation, expression, manifestation, of the Lord Jesus. Let it be Christ. That is the proof of the value of anything that we have.

“For you that believe is the preciousness.” Here is all this that is true of Christ. Go through John’s Gospel again in this way. Here are all the things that He says He is. *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35). *“I am the light of the world”* (John 8:12). *“I am the good shepherd”* (John 10:14). *“I am the true vine”* (John 15:1). *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25). Here is the great I AM saying what He is. And then you notice how frequently He links with that a ‘shall’. The ‘shalls’ of the ‘I ams’ in John’s Gospel are tremendously impressive — not always using the exact word, but in the context you will find the same conclusion. But here are some of the ‘shalls’. *“I am the bread of life”; “he that eats this bread shall live for ever”* (John 6:58). *“I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness”* (John 8:12). The link between what He is and ourselves is this, *“he that believeth on me”*. What I AM shall become true of him. *“He that believeth on me shall never die”* (John 11:26). *“... shall not hunger”* (John 6:35), shall never wander like sheep without a shepherd, he shall have a governing, controlling reality like a shepherd in his life. *“Shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”*. What I AM shall become true. *“I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes on Me shall never die.”* What I AM is made good when you believe.

Now, it is not what we are. I am dead; He is alive. I can never be other than dead, but He as the life can become life in me in my death, if only I believe. I am hungry, spiritually starved; He is bread, and I need never hunger; although I shall always hunger in myself, yet He will become the bread to supply me. Think of it! I need never hunger, I am down there in the country, isolated, getting no fellowship, no food; I am away in some place where there is no spiritual bread, and He says, *“He that eats Me shall never hunger.”* Is that dependent upon where I am, what my situation and circumstances are as to available spir-

itual meat? No, it is Himself, not place; it is Himself, not circumstances. But how can it be? — *“He that believes”*. Lord, I am hungry; You said that if I feed on You, I need not be hungry; now I take You at Your word, feed me with Yourself. Be very practical. I do not suggest experimenting with the Lord, but try it. You see the link between the preciousness: I am so unholy, I shall never be anything else; but He is holy, He satisfies God in the matter of righteousness and holiness.

The inclusive word of Peter on all the points (whatsoever it may be that He is that we are not that we need Him to be to us) the inclusive word is *“I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.”* Look at ourselves, what is going to be the end if we are left to ourselves? Well, there is no doubt about it, we can see the end — shame, failure — that is the end if it is left with us. *“He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame.”* Strange how Peter misquotes the passage from the Old Testament. The Old Testament that he is quoting here says, *“He that believeth shall not be in haste”* (Isa. 28:16). But is it a misquotation? Are you making haste? Why are you in such a hurry to save the situation, to do something about it? Why do you get worked up into this spirit of, ‘We must do something, if we don’t do something the whole thing is going to work out in disaster.’ Peter, under the Holy Spirit, just covers that and says, *“not be put to shame”*. You need not get excited and rush hither and thither in haste to try and save the situation. *“He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame.”* Unto you is the preciousness if you believe, and if you believe you will not be ashamed. You see the link of faith with what Christ is.

Christianity Not a Matter of our Soul-Life

Then here in the context of Paul’s word about Christ the foundation, he says some people build on that foundation a lot of rubbish, a lot of mixture. When we begin to investigate we never have to look very far to find out what the rubbish is. You do not have to make a list of things as to what Paul means by this variety of stuff: *“gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble”*. You have only to look at his letter and the immediate context and you will soon discover what he is saying. You Corinthians are trying to build up a Christianity firstly out of your own soul-life. *“Now the natural (soulical) man ...”*. That is his word to the Corinthians, and when you look at 1 Corinthians what a lot of soulicalism there is: this wisdom of words, this wisdom of the world, these likes and these dislikes and preferences and partialities and antipathies, and then their jealousies. That is no good on this foundation. Do not bring your own soul-life into relationship with Christ; it will not tally and it will not go through, it will go up in smoke. Are you trying to make your Christianity a matter of

how you feel? You will have a composite kind of Christianity of so many varieties, nothing consistent at all, a perfect patchwork. Some patchworks are very clever, patchwork cushions and quilts, marvellous things, very clever, but *you find* no design, inconsistency, every colour under the sun. That is the soul-life in the realm of its feelings; one feeling today, another tomorrow. You are up or down temperamentally in your soul; there is nothing consistent. Are you going to put that on Christ? It will not go with Christ at all. Your soul-life in the realm of your mind: all the conflicting reasonings and arguments, attempts at getting some settled mental conclusion about things. You never will. When you think you have arrived at a very good logical conclusion about a matter, something will come along and upset the whole thing. Robert Browning said about an infidel that he beautifully got to the place where he had created a theory which satisfied him that there was no God at all, and then he said, a sunset upset it all. You never get through that way. Your soul in the realm of its mental exercises and conflicts will never tally with Christ. And as for our own soul-will, strength to do, we may feel very strong, we are never going again to be caught like that, never going down that street again! It is not long before we are there. Oh, how ashamed our souls make us! How ashamed we have been because of the instability of our feelings or our wills or our thoughts. Ashamed! Ashamed! Ashamed! Our souls are making fools of us all the time. "*He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame.*" Paul says that this soul-life business must not come on Christ. It is a contradiction. It is not what you are, it is what Christ is. When you cannot see and understand and work it out mentally, when you cannot feel anything, no feelings at all, or when they are very bad feelings — that is one realm, that is just what we are. Christ is not that, and we have at such times to say, Lord, this is my infirmity, this is how I am, but you are other; I transfer my faith to you from myself and from these things. Christ is the foundation, and all that we build on the foundation has to be Christ Himself. He is not only the foundation, but He is the whole building in every part.

I have only indicated what I mean. It is a real desire that we should be more and more taken up with the Lord Jesus, not with teachings, truths as such. Thank God for every bit of revelation that comes for our deliverance and help, but do not let us regard the revelation as something in itself and begin to make that the means of propaganda. No, it is the Lord that comes through it, becomes more to us by it, the Lord Himself. If we do not see the Lord in everything, there is something wrong, and it will miscarry if it is not the Lord. So do not let us speak about this truth or that, about the Body, the church, one thing or another, but the Lord. There is no church but Jesus Christ Himself. There is no Body but Jesus Christ Himself. There is nothing but Himself. He is all and in all. "*Unto you that believe is the preciousness.*" Let us be sure that we are not trying to build up something, a Christianity or a church, or a movement or any-

thing that is simply composed of truths and doctrines and teachings, interpretations and so on, but that it is really Christ in us, the hope of glory.

THE GLORY OF DIVINE INITIATION

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87:3).

“Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22).

“Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

We have been walking about Zion in these messages, taking account of some of the aspects of this heavenly spiritual seed which is Christ and His own.

Now we come to that which is gathered into the one word — ‘glory’, the glory of Christ and of His own people. Now a very simple survey of the New Testament with that word ‘glory’ in mind — and you will only have to glance down the columns of a concordance under that word — will make a tremendous impression. The impression will be that this idea of glory, this matter of glory, seems to govern everything.

Glory Governs Everything

If you read the Gospels regarding the life of the Lord Jesus here on the earth, you will be impressed that in His life the dominant note and the motive of everything was the glory of God, that glory manifested in Himself and handed on to His disciples, His followers, His church. Anyone familiar with the New Testament or with the Gospels will find Scriptures, statements, leaping up to their memories at once. *“We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)*, and that is a comprehensive statement, for undoubtedly John, writing so very many years after the passing of the Lord Jesus to heaven and the conclusion of all His earthly life, was taking the sum of things. Perhaps he was remembering one particular point in His transfiguration of which both he and Peter, who were eyewitnesses, spoke as of beholding His glory then, yet covering those works of His from the beginning of his signs in Cana of Galilee, when he manifested His glory (John 2:11); covering all His works, covering all His movements, covering all His doings and His refusal to do, and His movements and His refusing to be moved, showing that the motive of everything in the life of the Lord Jesus was

the glory of God, and that manifested in Himself. Think about it. Recall the words: glory, glorify, glorified. How often they occur in connection with His time down here. And, although the cross seemed to be so very much other than fraught with glory, the undergirding and overriding thing of the cross and the work accomplished thereon and thereby is glory. On the one hand, the removal of all that could never be to the glory of God, the removal of the man, the kind of man, the old Adam, order of man, the removal of all the sin and its consequences, the whole mighty work of atonement, all to put out of the way that which could never be to the glory of God and never be glorified, the ground that was entirely against glory; and, on the other hand, in resurrection triumph, to bring in the ground for glory, it is glory that governs the work of the cross.

And then again it is the governing idea of all the apostles in the second section, coming in with the Acts. It is the spirit of glory that comes in in Acts 2, the Spirit of the glorified One, and He comes in in glory. The church was filled with glory, the church was brought in in glory, because Christ had been glorified, and that was the note, the triumphant note, of the church and of the preaching. This One Whom they had crucified, God had glorified. All the instruction, all the admonition, all the exhortation, all the warning, and all the ministry of consolation in the letters of the apostles has to do with this one matter of glory. *“Our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory”* (2 Cor. 4:17). It is glory that is there in the ministry of consolation, explaining the trial. If it is warning, it has to do with losing the on-high calling, losing the glory. And so the second great section of the New Testament is really dominated by this one thought of glory. We make the general statement and come to it more particularly as we go on.

And what can we say about the book of the Revelation? It is introduced with a presentation of the glorified and glorious Lord, and the doxology so soon breaks out. *“Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood ... to Him be the glory”* (Rev. 1:5). And from that introduction, the presentation of the glorious Lord, right through, the one thing that is governing all is the issue of glory. All has to be dealt with, the nations, the forces of evil, because God is going to fill His universe with His glory, and all that is not according to glory must be dealt with and got rid of, and at last that book of the Revelation emerges in the unveiling of the glorious city. It is only, in other words, the church in union with Christ — *“having the glory of God”* (Rev. 21:11). Well, do we need to stay to gather more evidence that the New Testament, at least, is governed by this thought of glory?

Now, that whole matter in general is divided into three main divisions. Firstly, there is the glory in divine initiation. Secondly, the glory in hidden operation. Thirdly, the glory in final manifestation. I think that sums up the

matter so far as the Word of God is concerned. Of course, there is a vast amount of detail, but in general that is what it amounts to.

Glory in Divine Initiation

We shall now occupy ourselves with the first of those three: glory in divine initiation. I think two outstanding instances can be cited as sufficient indication. We take the birth of the Lord Jesus and then the birth of the church. There are many other initiations in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New. We might say there are as many divine initiations as there are saints. And we find that they are all with glory.

Here we have these two. The divine initiation marked by the incarnation, the coming into flesh and into this world of the Son of God, the Son of Man. We ought to read the story again in Luke chapter 2, but it is hardly necessary.

The angel and his announcement, and then suddenly with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host singing, praising and saying, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased*" (Luke 2:14). It was a scene of glory, an occasion of glory, tumultuous glory in heaven breaking through into this world.

Something in a spiritual way happened like that on the day of Pentecost. We can only deduce that the ascension of the Lord Jesus was a wonderful scene in heaven. "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory will come in. Who is the King of glory?*" (Ps. 24:7-8). It is a scene of ecstasy in heaven, the receiving up — not just the ascending up, but the receiving up of the Lord of glory, the Prince of glory, and out of heaven's joy, heaven's tumultuous joy, the Holy Spirit came forth, and if what happened expresses one thing here on the earth in the church, it does express joy, it does speak of glory. Oh, what a day that was when the church was born out of the heavenly glory and filled with that glory!

Glory a Matter of Joy, Peace and Satisfaction

The initiation in both cases was with glory. There is no doubt about it, God's beginnings, God's own beginnings, are always in glory. And glory, if you break it up, if you look at it through the prism, is a matter of joy. It is not just some blaze of external light. It is joy, strange, often inexplicable joy. It is peace: discord ceases, strain departs, there is a wonderful sense of everything being all right. There is peace and satisfaction. An answer has been given to all that we have felt in our deepest being needed to be, ought to be, for the vindication of God, for the justification of God, for the explanation of heart questions and problems. When God acts, your problems cease, your questionings go out

in satisfaction. You are satisfied God has done this, that is all there is to it. How He has done it, that does not matter; by what means, sometimes so simple. We thought it was going to mean a mountain-removing miracle, and just quietly it has taken place. Satisfaction has entered into our hearts. We are not like Naaman of old — I thought at least He would have come out and done some extraordinary thing! “*Are not Abanah and Pharpar the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?*” (2 Kings 5:12), demanding something very extraordinary. No, it is just in this simple way God does it, and you are satisfied. When God does a thing, it is like that. That is the essence of the glory of God, that you are satisfied; and God’s beginnings, God’s initiations, are in glory in that sense, without anything of the external to account for it.

Take the birth of the Lord Jesus, that great initiation of God. Well, look at the conditions, look at the circumstances, look at the surroundings, look at everything naturally. No palace, no earthly comforts, no accompaniments of those sovereign activities of God which are according to men’s ideas that everything should be just so beautifully and wonderfully arranged on the earth side — no, everything to the contrary. From the earth standpoint: weakness, poverty, want, discomfort, and yet it is in glory; there is no contradiction of the divine glory. Heaven is satisfied, heaven is rapturous in glory, and anyone who has any real touch with that is quite satisfied. There is something here that is deeper and more wonderful than anything external. Is it not like that every time the Lord Jesus has a new birth? Forgive me putting it that way. Was it not like that when He was born in your heart and in mine? Well, on the outside, things did not seem very different. The home was the same, the business place was the same, the world was the same, the circumstances did not change a bit, but somehow there was a glory inside: joy, peace, satisfaction, glory. Perhaps some of you say, I was brought up in a Christian home, there was no great crisis in my experience, I seemed to move quite naturally into the Christian life. Have you never since in your spiritual history had an experience of the Lord, the Lord coming into your life, the Lord moving in in some way, in this way? The strain went out, the fret went out, the shame went out, the discontent went out, the disappointment went out. You were at peace, great joy flooded in, you were satisfied. I think we can all speak of that, and that more than once. God’s new beginnings are always in glory. It was with His Son, and — let me put it in this way again — every birth of His Son in a life or in a place is accompanied with these tokens of glory.

The Essence of Divine Glory

But what is the essence of this glory? What was the essence of that glory on the day when Jesus was born in Bethlehem? Now here you have to mark

very carefully a discrimination, because it is just here that people go wrong and get into difficulties. The essence of the glory of Christ's birth at Bethlehem, as is the essence of glory in every event and every fresh movement of God, was and is this: God Himself having brought in that which is to His pleasure. God has introduced and brought in that which is to His pleasure, and the Lord Jesus is the object of the Father's pleasure. If He is not there, there is nothing to the Father's pleasure. When He is there, there is something present which is to the pleasure of the Father. The Father's pleasure, satisfaction and joy is centred in His Son and where His Son is. Now the peril into which so many have fallen is that they have taken the effects of that rather than the cause. The effects — yes, joy and peace and satisfaction and deeply moved emotions, gratification and pleasure, and then, taking the effects, the feelings, the results, they have tried to perpetuate them. They have been afraid that they might go, they get into a state of fear — how long will this last? Shall I wake up in the morning and find it all gone? Will it be amongst those nine days' wonders? And so they have strained after holding and maintaining the effects, and missed the basic reality. The basic reality is Christ and Christ is God's delight and God's pleasure; not the feelings, but the fact. How many of you are trying to recover the feelings, or to hold on to the feelings, to have the feelings, the effects; reaching out for some abstract thing that you call glory? That is the mistake. God's facts remain. The feelings may change — that is the second part of this whole matter of glory — the hidden operations of glory, that touches another realm altogether. We are occupied with God's initiations. But when God gets His Son in, He has not just got a set of emotions, a lot of feelings; He has got a mighty eternal reality, the very object of divine glory. And Christ in you is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), not your feelings about it, but the mighty, basic reality. God has that which is to his pleasure. His pleasure is not in us, in what we are, however we feel. I do not believe that the Lord is any more pleased and satisfied with us when we are having an ecstatic time than he is when we are having a most miserable time. That is just the variableness of our own soul life. We can get up or we can get down; God's pleasure and satisfaction is centred in His Son, and He wants us to have our hold of faith upon His mighty fact and not the variableness of our own reactions. No, God's initiation is just this: that God has brought in, where there never was before, that which is to His satisfaction. It is Christ and not first of all the effects of Christ. Oh, the effects are there, praise God for that, but you know so often the effects are the elementary aspect of things, the infant period. You go out into maturity, and in maturity you will have to learn to live on Christ, not on feelings.

God's Initiations His Basis for Future Operations

Secondly, God, having obtained that which is to His pleasure, His initiations, His beginnings are His standards, and His basis for all future operation. Everything afterwards will be in accordance with the beginning, the initiation. I do not mean that for ever and always there will be that conscious ecstasy, that sense of glory. But I do mean this, that God, having obtained it, introduced that which is to His satisfaction, the seat and centre of His glory. And He will be working for ever after to make that which is in His Son true in us so that we are, in conformity to His Son, on the way to glory ourselves, progressive glory by that which satisfies God being wrought into us so that the glory is spreading out and taking hold, and we are coming nearer and nearer to that of which the Word speaks, "*God ... called you unto his eternal glory*" (1 Pet. 5:10). The beginnings of God govern the end. The end is to correspond to the beginning, but even in greater measure. The beginnings may be comparatively small. Bethlehem in a sense is small, is little; Christ there is limited; and yet all the fulness of the glory is opened up in that smallness, in that littleness. In the end, it will not be additional glory. It will be that glory which has expanded and filled the universe. God is working according to His beginnings to have His end corresponding therewith. So the beginnings of God are the basis of all God's activities. There will be that in the end which is glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever (Eph. 3:21).

This is practical. If the Lord has done something, has introduced something of Himself, of His Christ, in us personally and individually in this earth, as a work of His, that beginning has been God's, and it has come in with these accompanying manifestations of deep joy and gratification. And oh, how blessed and precious a thing it is to have the assurance that this is of God, this is not of man, the Lord did this. How assuring and heart satisfying it is to have that realisation! And when God does that in a life that individual is able to say, 'I did not choose Him but He chose me, the initiative was with God. It was not my doing, it was the Lord's doing; if it had not been for the Lord I would never be here today.' Many can say that all the way along what He did at the beginning He has continued to do. I have wandered, yea fallen, but I am here today because God started this thing, and it is going on because it started in glory and glory is not a matter of the variableness of my nature, not at all to do with me. It is His Son, He planted His Son and He has worked and is working all the way through my life on the ground of Christ, not on my ground at all. When I come at last to the fulness of that glory to which He has called me I shall have to say: He did it, it was the Lord's doing, not mine; He did it!

God is working on the basis of His initiation. I believe that there is a great deal of very profound truth in the New Testament gathered into that, upon

which we will not embark. May it not be that the whole of those deep things of God gathered into Paul's words in Ephesians 1:4 about being chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and in Romans 8:29, "*whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*", (which takes us right out of time and all that belongs to time, right out of this human life here and all that belongs to it, and places us right there on the rock in eternity) that it is all gathered into this, that God has taken the initiative and is working according to His initiating? I am not ruling out our response and all that is incumbent upon us to go on, to be steadfast — that is another side. But all our effort, our determination, would be futile if God had not started this thing Himself and laid the foundation for it. If our obedience, our compliance, our response, our settling of our hearts to go on with God, if all that were not upon a basis that God has laid down, how in vain it would be; but it is simply our coming to the rock. Thank God, the rock is there and the rock is Christ. He has done it, and so, with our deviations, we come back. With our failures, we rise again. We are ashamed and grieved, we suffer discipline, but we are not cast off. God started this, and that is glory; it is the glory of His grace.

My point is that God is working according to His beginnings. His beginnings are His basis for all His further activities right on to the end, and because Christ is the beginning, the end will be Christ, and the end is Christ because Christ was the beginning. God, then, has commenced with us in glory. How many of us are able to say, Yes, I know something about that. I know at a certain point at the beginning something happened, and the effects of that were great joy, great peace, a great sense of satisfaction. It was just glory. I can only use that word about it, it was glory. I have many times made this terrible mistake of trying to make everything of the effects, the nice feelings that I had then, and I have forgotten the fact of Christ, but I know something of the glory, and every time that the Lord is able to get something more of His Son into our lives that thing happens again. Here is a controversy that the Lord may have with us or we may have with the Lord. We are held up because of some unsettled question. There is a dispute going on between the Holy Spirit and ourselves. We are delaying, we are disobedient, we are slow, we are not girding ourselves to the battle. We have no peace, no rest, no satisfaction, our lives are torn, the glory goes out of our face, out of our testimony. Then the day comes when, under the Holy Spirit's persistent, urgent constraint, we say, I am going to have this thing settled! We go in and we shut the door and say, This is an end of this, something has to happen. We get before the Lord, and there may be a battle, a bitter battle, but we get through. The Lord is given His place, we step aside, our wills, our desires, whatever may be involved, we hand up to the Lord and say: That is gone, I have finished; now Lord Your will, Your way. When we get through, the glory is back again. Yes, joy, peace, satisfaction. Every

bringing in anew or in greater fulness of the Lord Jesus over a matter is accompanied by glory. If only we knew how much glory we are forfeiting by allowing the struggle to go on so long, by not coming to grips with the situation! Oh, we are robbing ourselves of the glory — and we all do it. We are slow to learn.

But here are God's facts, that it is in His Son and His Son having His place, that glory dwells upon that, and so we close on that note. If the Lord can only have a full place for His Son, the measure of glory in our hearts will be commensurate. Circumstances may not change at all. You may still be up against the hardships, the difficulties of your way and place and work. Things may not change, people may not change and work may not change and place may not change, but the inside is different. And may it not be — one does not want to be exacting — that the Lord does not do anything on the outside until He has that position on the inside, that delay is because we have not got to the place of glorying in infirmities. We want to get glory by deliverance from them; we are not glorying in them. Well, let us ask the Lord about it, but keep in view that God's thought is glory and all His beginnings, whether it be that first phase of His beginnings, or those beginnings of so many after-phases, when He is beginning a new phase and yet a new phase and still a further phase, (how many new beginnings we have had — not going right back, but as it were a new phase, a new beginning), all God's beginnings where He gets what He wants for His Son are fraught with glory. The Lord bring us into the glory and the glory into us, the glory which is Christ. "*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*" "*Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God.*" "*Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.*"

(to be continued)