



the
**Golden
Candlestick**

THE CROSS AND HIGHER GROUND

Part 3

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THE HIGH GROUND OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

Reading: Isa. 25:1-12 (note verses 6-8); Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 21:1-4; 9-11.

We have been occupied so far with the matter of the cross and higher ground. We have had brought before us what is believed to be the Lord's desire for His people, that they should occupy the high place, the heavenlies, in fellowship with Himself. This is the ultimate thought of God for His own, and it is the full thought of God for His own, that when God reaches His end, and when God reaches the fulness of His desire, He will have a people who are a heavenly people, who are a heavenly, exalted, and a very much lifted-up people in the best sense of those words. The time is swiftly passing which leads to that great event which represents spiritually and literally the realization of His thought, the translation of the church to glory. We have stressed constantly that the literal translation has to have alongside of it a spiritual condition, and that it is that spiritual condition the Lord is especially anxious to have in His people; a spiritual and moral condition of high levels of life and experience which are preparing them to occupy the high places that He has already prepared for them. We have to be prepared for that for which God has prepared, and the preparation is along the way of spiritual elevation, spiritual going up, followed by a literal going up. We will seek to go on with what the Lord has yet to say on this matter.

In Isaiah 25, as you have noticed, we have a mountain. Three times the words occur, "in this mountain", and with that mountain various features are connected. That mountain is Jerusalem and Zion. There is an earthly aspect of this historic connection related to the Jews, but there is also a heavenly aspect related to the church. That there are two Jerusalems and two Zions in Scripture needs no proving or arguing; it is clearly set forth. The apostle Paul speaks of the Jerusalem which is from beneath and the Jerusalem which is from above, and it is clearly seen that there is an earthly Jerusalem and an earthly Zion, and a heavenly Zion. One represents the historic, the other represents the eternal; one is earthbound and the other knows nothing of that bondage or that limitation. If that is true, that there are two Jerusalems and two Zions, and that they both come out of the same mind, then we expect that there will be similar spiritual principles which govern both, which lie behind both, and we shall

expect that the one that is seen will be a type and illustration of the one that is not seen. And so we find that while we have history in the Old Testament, typology, symbolism, representation, we have there the embodiment of spiritual principles which are not related there to earth or to time, but which are related to heaven and to eternity and which are reproduced, so to speak, in that which comes out of heaven and out of eternity. And when we begin to look for the present spiritual value of Isaiah to Christian believers, we shall find that it is very largely brought out in the letter to the Ephesians.

There is a living link between Isaiah and Ephesians. In Isaiah you hear, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come”, and there is a very real sense in which the letter to the Ephesians is the light of the assembly. If you get Ephesian revelation, (revelation, not just doctrine), you have come fully into the light of God’s eternal purpose. Now then, we are going to mark some of the features of Isaiah 25 and the letter to the Ephesians, always with the basic thought in mind, ‘the Lord shall bring us on to higher ground’, and that is where we begin. We have noted that in Isaiah 25 we are on high ground. “In this mountain” is repeated three times; you are in a place of elevation. When you come to the letter to the Ephesians you know quite well you are there. We shall mark that more specifically in a moment, but what we want to see right at the outset is this, that an Ephesian ministry demands an Ephesian position. And in saying that we are not just saying something trite or commonplace, or even giving expression to a truism. It is a most striking thing that with scholarship and natural intellectual ability you can get right into the letter to the Ephesians so far as its teaching is concerned, and yet it makes no practical difference as to spiritual effectiveness, spiritual position, ascendancy in spiritual matters, or in the matter of the eternity of vocation. It may puzzle you sometimes to see how men of great intellectual capacity have analysed these New Testament letters, such as the letter to the Ephesians, and yet have continued in a thing which was diametrically opposed to the whole Ephesian position. To have an Ephesian ministry you must have an Ephesian position. Ephesians is meant to bring us not merely to knowledge, but to a position, a life, a standing, a mighty effectiveness; in a word, on to high ground spiritually in every realm. That is the position to which we are introduced in both of these portions of Scripture, an Ephesian position, a place up above. Now what is the Ephesian position? Well, take up your letter to the Ephesians and you will note that for the most part the Ephesian position is marked by three features.

Firstly, it is marked by *the eternity of things*. Look at chapter 1:4, “Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world”. There is a phrase, “before the foundation of the world”. Verse 5: “Having foreordained us unto the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself”. Verse 10: “Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times”. That gets you out of something that is

merely of time duration; it takes you into the “summation” of the ages. Verse 11: “In whom we also were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His will”. Chapter 2:7: “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace”. Verse 10: “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.” Chapter 3:11: “According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”, verse 21: “Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages for ever and ever.” You see how this thing is marked by the eternity of things. As I read Isaiah chapter 25 I was struck with this, that when you come to the end of verse one, “Thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old”, (and in my margin the note is, see foreordination Eph. 1:1-11). You see the link? You come up in this mountain and then immediately you come into touch with the eternity of things. That is the Ephesian position. You go right out of time.

The second feature is that of *the heavenliness of things*. Here we are on very familiar ground. Eph. 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” Verse 20,21: “... which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenlies far above all”. Chapter 2:6: “And raised us up with Him and made us to sit with Him in the heavenlies in Christ.” Chapter 6:12: “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.” You see the heavenly feature which marks things here when you come up on to this level, into this mountain.

And then the third feature is *the universality of things*. Chapter 1:10: “Unto a dispensation of the fulness of times to sum up all things in Christ, the things in heaven and things upon the earth; in Him, I say, in whom also we are ...”. And in verse 21: “... far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all.” Chapter 3:10: “To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God”; and then of course again in chapter 6:12 you see the universality of things. You are not dealing with something local, not flesh and blood; but the whole range of principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. That is the universality of things with which we come into touch when we reach this position, this high ground of the Ephesian position. Now all these are gathered

up in three things as to the church (we have just been laying our foundations). The first of these three things is, as you notice, the one body. Twice in this letter to the Ephesians that phrase occurs, "There is one body."

All that we have said about the eternity of things and the universality of things, and the heavenliness of things is true in relation to the body, and that body is the church, not an earthly body but a heavenly body, not an earthly church but a heavenly church. The church, which is the body of Christ is a thing which is the embodiment of the eternity, the heavenliness and the universality of God's thought and God's purpose; all that is gathered up into the body of Christ. That is what I meant when I said at the outset that it is possible to get the content of a letter like the letter to the Ephesians, intellectually, without it making very much difference to you, but the position must be arrived at, which means that in the body of Christ, the church which is His body, we immediately become marked by these features, that we come into what is eternal in God's thought and purpose.

We come right into relation to what is called the eternal purpose He purposed in Christ Jesus, and we are not just pottering about here on the earth trying to do something for the moment which is going to improve the world; not being occupied with things here on the earth religiously, or even evangelically, which are things in themselves related to this earth for the time being, but we have come right into oneness with God's eternal purpose and thought. Everything and every moment of the life of the believer here is related to eternity in a specific purpose that God is engaged in working out and realizing. We do not have meetings just for the sake of having meetings, or getting help for the moment, but every meeting should be put right into the eternal purpose of God and make a contribution towards that and should be given character by that. An eternity put into every hour. Something which has come out of the "before times eternal" put into this hour which shall shine forth throughout all the ages of eternity as of specific character relative to what was in God's mind when He projected this purpose into this universe.

Eternity — everything has got to be tested by that. We are not working for our lifetime. We are not working that we might make a name here on the earth, do something that will be remembered as our work, not something that will collapse when we leave it but something which will go on into eternity. Now if Paul truly represents the truth in his own life and person, the truth which was given to him as his specific ministry, the truth of the body of Christ, surely we today can see the feature of eternity about that ministry. Was there ever a ministry, apart from that of the Lord Jesus, which has had the mark of eternity upon it more clearly than his ministry? Of course, the ministry of all the apostles was eternal, but how throbbing with life today is the ministry of that man! He has survived more criticism, more attempts at destructiveness than any

other man. The epithet that is held over him is 'Paulinism'. Ah, but the hammers are broken on that anvil, and they are still breaking. It is not the anvil that goes, it is the thing that strikes it that goes and today the eternity of this thing relative to the church, the body of Christ, is more vital, more potent than it ever was, and we shall find that the Lord is going to maintain this ministry in a marvellous upholding, and bring us back to an Ephesian position for our very life. Ephesians 6 represents a position which, if the church does not take it, will go out, and any believer who does not come to that position of spiritual ascendancy over principalities and powers will be beaten. For our very life we have got to come on to this higher ground. There is eternity about this thing and we have to come into the eternity of it. We are not fighting a battle for the day, we are fighting a battle of the ages, and eternity is bound up with that. With every feature of the church's life and ministry, eternity is bound up. It has always been a matter of very great strength to me to know we are fixed into something that is eternal in our ministry.

Nothing is worthwhile if it is going to finish with our lifetime, if we are only doing something while we live and we shall die sooner or later; I would not go on another day on that level. But we must see we were chosen in Him and foreordained before the world was, and put into something then, in the eternity past, which will sweep the ages into eternity and never end. We are in that in ministry, that is high ground, that is elevation, that is moral elevation which brings you to elevation of proper dignity. We ought to have a proper kind of dignity, the dignity of a Nehemiah who says "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down." "I cannot come down on to your level of things." We must be set upon the principle of a spiritual and right kind of dignity which is taken from the nature of the work in which we are engaged, not ours because we are something, but because of our calling and we are the greatest people in the universe. That is not something just flung out; that is God's estimate of His church. Here on the earth they are nothing, in themselves they are nothing, but God has an inheritance in them. Think of God coming into something for His own enrichment. Can God be enriched by the church? Yes, He has an inheritance in the church. It is wonderful to think of the Lord Jesus letting go all the glory of heaven because He had seen one pearl of great price, and that pearl is the church.

The dearest thing to Him in the universe is His Bride, the New Jerusalem; for that, for Her, He has and will let everything go. Well, that ought to give us a right kind of dignity, because we are called unto a great thing in relation to the Lord. Here is this poor, cowed, bowing and scraping thing on the earth going hand in glove with the world to try and help it on with its ministry and mission, making appeals to the ungodly to keep itself going; a caricature of the church. How low she has fallen! The Lord says, "Come on to higher ground." The

eternity of things is here; we are not children of time; the heavenliness of things is here in this body; the universality of things is here in this body; not of earth but of heaven; not of any location, but in ministry and character, universal. *The one body*, not an earthly body; that is the first thing into which all these three things are gathered. Eternity, heavenliness and universality are gathered into the body of Christ. Oh that we should see the real nature of the body of Christ! If we saw it, it would bring us on to higher ground.

What is true about the eternity of things in that body is also true of the heavenliness of things. The church is not an earthly thing. And that which has spoiled the church has been man's constant endeavour to make it an earthly thing, something that has wonderful patronage, something that is linked with the earth, something to make an impression upon men. The church which is His body is nothing of that. It has been cut clean off from this earth; it is in the heavenlies, and anything that would make the church to be related to and linked with this world is opposed, completely contrary, to God's thought. The church is here in this world to bear a testimony, to register a spiritual fact, but not to take root, not to anchor itself; it is a stranger here for the time being; it will possess the earth later on. At present the world knows it not because it knew not its Head, the Lord Jesus. We shall see the value of that as we go on. There is one body and it is a heavenly body; it belongs to the upper regions. Universality is related to that body. The church is not of any location. We have often said there is no such thing as a Chinese or an English church, a Scotch church, a French church, an American church, no such thing as an Ephesian church, or the Corinthian church; it was always the church in Corinth. It is the church in China, the church in India, the church in England, but one church according to God's thought. Mark you, it is not undenominational any more than it is denominational and it is not interdenominational any more than it is denominational, and in a sense it is not international any more than it is denominational; it is supernational. The church is not composed of a combination of all sorts; that you make up the church by taking some out of every kind and bring them together and they still retain their distinctiveness of nationality, of character, denomination. The coming together of all kinds of denominations is not useful, and to say that is the church, is not true. It may be a blessed thing to let go all those things, but that is not the church essentially.

The church is something where every kind of distinction which is in nature has been ruled out by the cross and there is one Spirit. It is something above the nations. It is not an international organization, it is a heavenly body, universal in its features. It is not made up of Jews and Greeks, it is where there is neither Jew nor Greek. That is the Word of the Lord. People think that when you get a mixture of nations in a gathering that that is a beautiful representation of the church, but not necessarily. It is blessed to have that, but there is something

which must lie behind all that to make the church. The thing which lies back of that, the very deepest thing, is that we have all been baptized by one Spirit into one body whether we be Jew or Greek. That which is of nature is finished, that which is of this world order has been finished. Blessed be God, when He gets the church there Babel will be destroyed. We will get over language difficulties without any trouble, we will speak the same heavenly tongue, and that which has come in to defeat will have gone out fully and the oneness will be manifested on the outside as it is now in reality on the inside in the heavenly body: universality in the body of Christ. We may come back and say another word about that presently; that is only the first thing into which all these are gathered up.

Secondly, there is *One Spirit*. “All baptized in one Spirit into one body”. That means, I think pre-eminently, that the government is in the hands of the Holy Spirit and that He is the life of the one body. It relates to government and life. In this body of which we have been speaking, marked by these features, the government must be in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It is a most practical thing and a most necessary thing. If this is a body related to the eternal purpose, who knows anything about the eternal purpose but the Holy Spirit? He alone knows the mind of God, we do not know it. We shall only know it in so far as the Holy Spirit dwells within us and is allowed to teach us. Now if the church, the body of Christ, is related to that eternal purpose, the realization of that eternal purpose depends upon the intelligent outworking of it, the inworking of it and working according to it. Therefore, the government of the Holy Spirit is essential in this body, and any kind of church in which a council of men does the governing by arranging, programming, organizing, and using their natural judgment in the order of things, is a contradiction of the church which is His body. The church which is the body of Christ is not run by councils, boards, committees, diaconates and so on; upon a basis of making plans and arranging things that seem to men to be the best things, even though they may be influenced by the very highest motives. The church is governed by the Holy Spirit, and only men full of the Holy Spirit and faith will be chosen by God to have administrative positions. “*Full of the Holy Spirit*” is administrative qualification, not full of wonderful wisdom, not full of Christian influence amongst men, not full of means by which things can be carried on, but full of the Holy Spirit. The government of the Spirit is essential to this heavenly body, and only as the Spirit governs will there be life. He is the Spirit of government and of life, and the life depends entirely upon His government, His control. That is true not only for the whole body, that is true for every member of the body. Just in so far as the Holy Spirit has complete control and government in my life, spirit, mind and body shall I know the power of the life of the Risen Lord to live, to walk, to grow spiritually and to fulfil ministry. And that is true

of every member. He is the Spirit of life and He does not operate as the Spirit of life except as He is given the place of government in the life. You will not have life from the Lord if you are not walking in the ways of the Lord. If you want life you must go the way of the Lord and in so far as you do not, you are in death.

That is very simple but it is very important, for this church which is His body is called to be above all other things, the witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will touch upon that later. The church, the body of Christ is called into being to be the witness to the universe that Christ is raised from the dead. The apostolic standing was only upon the ground of witnessing the resurrection, or being witness to the resurrection, and if that was the basis of fellowship, and the New Jerusalem has upon it the names of the twelve apostles, the New Jerusalem has to take its character from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The body of Christ is in that sense the testimony to Christ risen. The impact of the exceeding greatness of God's power which He wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead has to be registered upon the whole realm and range of death through the church now, and at the end. For the church to fulfil that vocation, for the church to come there, the Holy Spirit must be absolutely in possession and having full governmental control. Is that the church that we know of? It is our business to see to it that as a member of that body it is true in our case individually. That is the way of life, life triumphant over death; it is His triumph in resurrection. There is one Spirit, in government and in life. And there are the bonds of the body which is the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Then the third thing here into which all this other is gathered up is the *one Sovereign Head*. "Hath given Him to be Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all". One Sovereign Head; the eternity is gathered up into that Head, "which He purposed in Christ before the world was". "To gather up all things into Christ, things in heaven, things in earth". That is universality of the Headship; the eternity of the Headship; the heavenliness of the Headship. "Hath raised Him, made Him to sit at His own right hand in the heavenlies far above all". You have the three features gathered up into the Head and the church, the body of Christ, takes its character from the Head. What does the Head represent? It represents the authority, the seat of authority. Paul speaks to the Colossians about "holding fast the Head". That means giving the Lord Jesus His place as the Administrative Headquarters of all the body's life and action. It means drawing our life from the Head, drawing our power from the Head, drawing everything from the Lord Jesus as our Head. It means submitting everything to Him for His authority, and that Headship represents our safety. Is the church to be preserved from error? How does the church fall into error? By getting out from its cover, becoming exposed to

deluding spirits, deceiving spirits. What is its cover? The absolute Sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus; He is Head. The apostle says to the Corinthians, “As the man is head of the woman, so Christ is Head of the church, the body (every man)” and then he goes on in those mysterious words of his about covering; the infinite peril that comes to a woman if she does not wear the sign of authority upon her head.

Mysteries to the natural mind, but he is bringing in the deep things of a heavenly order and what he is presenting there is this great fact, that to be saved from being smitten, deluded, deceived, misled, and by deception being smashed and broken, we must remain under the sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus in all matters. His will has got to be established over our wills; His desires have got to be established over our desires; His judgments have got to be established over our judgments; His thoughts and reasonings over our thoughts and minds. And it is not what we think, what we judge, what we reason, what we feel, what we desire, what appeals to us, and it is not what we do or choose to do, it has all to be submitted to Him for His judgment. The impress of His own mind, will, desire, and everything has to come there, to be submitted to Him, to His Sovereign Headship. Immediately we lean to our own understanding we are exposed, and the enemy takes advantage and smites that uncovered head. Immediately we act by our own force and volition we are uncovered and the enemy will get us into chaos and darkness. The church has been misled because it has not maintained that life in the Holy Spirit where everything is received from the Sovereign Head. If it did that it would be on higher ground today.

The Lord must bring us back on to the higher ground of the Ephesian position where truly it is one body, one Spirit, one Sovereign Head embracing all the fulness of the eternal purpose in its eternity, its heavenliness, its universality. It is only possible as Christ is really taken as Sovereign Head in all the practical things of our daily life. If we forsake that we forsake our protection and we will be smitten. This is the high ground of the heavenly Jerusalem; it is the mountain. That is just the first fragment — we have got to see a very great deal more of what this means in order that we might come to this Ephesian position. May the Lord bring us there today. It is going to mean a great deal to us if we come to it.

Just for one moment contemplate this — all that I am that I hate in myself, and all that I am not which I know I ought to be, yet I was in God’s thought before this world came into being, and not only was I in God’s foreknowledge but in God’s “foreordained”. He chose me in Christ. Get your position and see what is involved in that. What does that mean? Say, Lord, bring me into all that You planned in Your purpose. Do apply it to your heart. You may feel the weakest, the poorest, you may feel that all these grand things have nothing to do with you, but they do have something to do with you, and you have

everything to do with them. God has given us the infinite comfort of His Word that He has chosen the weak, the foolish, and the things which are not — He has chosen you before the world was, in Christ, unto His eternal purpose and that ought to make us reach out and see that when God does a thing like that He does it with a big meaning.

THE HIGH GROUND OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

Reading: Isaiah 25.

Now we are able to go on from that point and continue to see the ministry from this position, this place of spiritual elevation. This is the mount to which the Lord gives character. You notice that in Isaiah 25 it is what the “Lord of Hosts” is going to do about this mountain. The Lord of Hosts has spoken about this thing and the Lord of Hosts will do it. In this mountain the Lord of Hosts will do this, and that, and everything. It is something that the Lord will do; the Lord Himself will give the character to this mountain. And in Ephesians the ministry there, this spiritual eminence, this spiritual high ground, is the ministry of the Lord Himself. It is the character which He gives to the ministry; it is the ministry which He constitutes. And then you are able to see what that ministry is on this mountain, which ministry is constituted by the Lord Himself, which takes its character from Him.

What is the first thing in Isaiah 25 that relates to that ministry as a feature given to it by the Lord of Hosts? “In this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” The feature of an Ephesian position, of a ministry on this high ground, is *abundance of good food*. Now I am sure that ravishes all your hearts. We are in a day when the food question is a very acute one spiritually. There are multitudes of the Lord’s people today who are hungry and who are not being fed, who are living on husks, and there is a very real problem about the food question. We are not saying a thing which is contradicted by the prevailing condition when we say that it is the Lord’s will and desire that there shall be for His people an abundance of good food. The conditions as they exist are not according to the Lord’s mind, they are quite contrary. Spiritual starvation is not after His heart. His thoughts and purposes are all the other way: “In this mountain will Jehovah of Hosts make for all people a feast of fat things.” But as we have said, in order to have an Ephesian ministry you have got to have an Ephesian position. And you will not get an abundance of good food if you are on any lower level of the church, the body of Christ, than the Ephesian position, and it is by reason of their being bound up with a lower and lesser thing that people are starving today spiritually. The

trouble with so many of them is they know they are hungry, they know they are not being fed, they know the whole thing is not according to God, but they will not pay the price of taking the Ephesian position and coming clear with the Lord into the heavenlies. That is the explanation of the whole thing in this spiritual starvation matter. If you want an abundance of good food then you must come into the place where you get it spiritually. You must come into the heavenlies and you will have plenty of it. You will have more than enough. You will have wherewith to give away. That is not fiction, that is fact. There are those of us who are living testimonies to this fact. We knew the day when, earthbound in our vision and conception of the church, we had to labour and struggle day and night to find wherewithal to meet demands of that order of things. We had to burn midnight oil to keep abreast of theological literature in order to have something to give out as each demand came round week by week. For us the food question was, indeed, an acute one and looking back, we do not know how the poor people managed. But the time came when the Lord opened the heavens to us in relation to the true nature of the church which is His body, and by applying the cross and all the rest, that is, the cost, the price that had to be paid, we were brought out of the earthly into the heavenlies and from that day to this we have known no spiritual want. There has been an abundance of spiritual food, and the wonderful thing is that very often we start empty and we finish up with twelve baskets full.

There is an abundance of good food to be had when you are out there; you can have it and you can have wherewith to meet the need of others. In this ministry it is the position that makes available the riches, the fulness of the Lord. That is true, and I am quite sure that the food question, the food problem is going to be solved when people will pay the price of taking a heavenly position and leaving the lower grade of mere tradition, mere history, and coming into that living fellowship with the Lord in the heavenlies. When shall we have exhausted the food that is in Ephesians? Men have been living on Ephesians for 2000 years and we are still at it, and I sat down with Ephesians again this morning and felt I knew nothing at all. But you have to be in a position to know what is there, to recognise what is there and to enjoy what is there, and that position is a heavenly union with the Lord Jesus, “a feast of fat things ... wines well refined”. That is one phase of the ministry from this higher ground, this mount.

A second thing is the *universality of the ministry*: “Unto all peoples”. It is a blessed thing to see the Lord doing that. This is not an international organization, this is something which, because it is according to God’s mind, because it approximates to His thought, because it is on His level of things, the Lord can use to minister universally and spiritually. You do not have to organize it, but the Lord does it; the Lord constitutes a universal ministry when

He gets things according to His own mind on the right spiritual level. It is just very blessed and very wonderful to see how He has done this and how He does do it. The Lord knows where the food is and the Lord knows where the hungry people are, and He knows how to bring the two together without any organization at all. It is wonderful how He does it, quietly, secretly; in a large measure it is unknown. The Lord gives the characteristic of universality to things which are according to His own mind and causes that that thing shall cease to be merely local, merely in a corner. It begins to move out into ever widening circles and before long has reached the ends of the earth without any effort and machinery, and peoples everywhere are deriving spiritual benefit from that. The Lord supplies in this mountain for all peoples. Take the Ephesian letter itself and you see how that ministry has become a universal ministry. The ministry of the apostle which is found in Ephesians is of universal range, and it goes even beyond the peoples of the earth, it reaches right up into the heavenlies, it affects the principalities and powers. How wide is this ministry which is a ministry of the Holy Spirit! It is resultant from a position reached in the Lord, and beloved I want you to notice this. We said that you must individually and personally recognise that you were foreknown before the foundation of this world, and chosen in Christ then, and foreordained; that God knew you then and had His eye upon you, and called you in relation to this purpose of eternity, though you be in your own eyes very weak and poor and of no account, and although in the eyes of the world you may be utterly at a discount and a nothing. But when we are come into our position truly in Christ, He marks us with a universality of significance. Every believer, the simplest, weakest believer, is marked by universality when in right relationship to the Lord Jesus. The ministry of every believer has no bounds whatever. There is no limit to the range of a prayer ministry in the Holy Spirit. Each member of the body of Christ is brought into the vastness of the body's full purpose. The body of Christ is a wonderful, universal thing. We can, in the Lord, touch other members of that body in any part of the world and in a moment of time it can be done: ministering to one another from the ends of the earth as the Holy Spirit governs, as we hold fast the Head we fill all things, we affect all things and there is no limit whatever to the range of our ministry. Oh if we could get a strong apprehension of this great truth.

You see that this body is intended to minister throughout the whole universe. It is going to do that in the ages to come but it is already called to enter into that ministry, to touch the heavenly ranges; that is Ephesians 6; to touch all saints, to touch all situations and reach all places and affect all matters. It is a universal body and each member takes its character from the whole body, and we must recognise that no man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself, and we are not up in a corner, limited, hedged in, but we

have the universe as our parish to walk about in, we are called unto a spiritual effectiveness which is universal. I believe if the church had maintained that truth and position things would have been in a very different condition from what they are today, and if the Lord could recover something of that in His body it is going to make a tremendous difference. It is going to affect those children of His out on the far-flung line of battle, hard pressed, sometimes almost pressed out of measure. If only the Lord could bring again the revelation of the truth of the oneness of the body also to His people in an adequate measure it would make a tremendous difference to the issue of these situations; much less defeat, isolation, much less triumph of the enemy. The Lord brings us into the universality of our ministry that we can, in Him, affect the whole universe, and that is what we are called unto. The Lord does it when He gets His people on the mountain. Then He marks them, without organization, by what is universal. From becoming something just local, not by any effort or strategy or plans and programmes, but by simply moving in the Lord's realm with Him, we have seen things reaching out and out until the ends of the earth have been touched. Just a simple, pure, spiritual ministry to the benefit of the Lord's people everywhere. It is true that that is what happens and it happens in quite a spontaneous way, it simply comes about; the Lord gives that feature. And mark you, it is impossible for anything to be truly according to God's thought as to the church and remain local, national, or even international, it has to become universal; all peoples met in their need through that which has come up on to God's level of things.

Then there is a third feature and that is *timelessness*, the timelessness of the purpose. This purpose is not something that has been developed in time, in an age, this purpose has been fixed before time was and this purpose is going on when time shall be no more. And we are brought into the timelessness of the purpose of God in our ministry, in our vocation, when we come into this Ephesian position, on to this mountain. We said in the previous chapter that it is a most blessed thing to realise that we are not labouring for a lifetime, not labouring for a mere fraction of time; we are putting forth our strength in the Lord for something which is eternal, which will never cease and never fade, but will go on for ever and ever; something related not only to the ages but to the eternities. "God prepared the works afore", the counsels which were of old. The work in which you and I are engaged, is the work, if we are in it by the Holy Spirit, which God arranged before times eternal. It is not our work for the Lord, not something we have taken up, instituted, projected, organized, but something into which the Lord has put us which is the work that He prepared before the world was. It is wonderful to think that if our lives are led by the Holy Spirit, we are being led to do the very things that God determined to be done before ever this world was. Oh that we might be kept to that.

We instigate and initiate so many things that come from ourselves which we call work for the Lord, but the important thing is to get into the work *of* the Lord, not *for* the Lord. Of Timothy it is said, “he worked the works of God.” We want to work the works of God, and not our works for God. The Holy Spirit will bring us into the works which God foreordained, that is, work which He arranged, and that makes our works eternal. It is taking the things of God out of eternity past and carrying them into effect now, and they are going to stand for all eternity; they are worthwhile. This is something that will not leave us as though we had nothing else to live for; we have all eternity to live for what has been taking place here. Things that we have brought into our lives here by the Holy Spirit are the things for which we are going to live for all eternity. An eternity about the purpose of the ministry in the heavenlies, in this mountain.

And the fourth feature is *revelation to darkened hearts*. “In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts remove the face of the covering that covers all peoples and the veil spread over all nations.” The prayer of the apostle was “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened”. In this mountain the eyes of your heart will be enlightened. The Lord will take the veil of the covering from off all faces in this mountain. It is the revelation to darkened hearts. And among all the needs of the Lord’s people today, not by any means the least, is the need of real spiritual revelation, the eyes of their hearts being enlightened. Oh, there is a wonderful power about having the eyes of the heart enlightened. There is not only emancipation for the person who has that enlightenment, but there is a mighty registration of power upon the power of darkness itself as it blinds the eyes of them that believe not. To be in a place of spiritual revelation is to be in a high place of power where we are not just giving out things we have read, studied, worked up, got together; not things which we have heard but that which has been revealed to us by God Himself concerning His Son. It is a high place to be in, it gives power. We can have all the doctrine of Ephesians and Colossians, and of all the other letters, and of the Bible, and have all the truth and yet lack that spiritual impact, that effectiveness, that vitality, that energy of God which quickens, makes alive, lifts, liberates, brings people out into a place of enlargement and fulness and ascendancy. There are multitudes of the Lord’s people today who have got truth, but that is not enough; it is not enough to have and hold the truth. Have you got the power, the energy, the vitality of the truth, the emancipating, liberating effect of the truth? That is the question, and the difference is coming into doctrine or coming into revelation.

There is a great difference. You may not understand that, and it is one of those impossible things of transporting to another’s mind, but we can only state it as being true. It is a fact that you may give out a thing which is truth as to doctrine, and people recognise it is true doctrine, and yet it is just a matter of information to them and they do not go away lifted in spirit by it. They go away

having heard it all, can find no fault with it, it is quite right; but they are just the same in the measure of spiritual life as when they came. The same thing may be given out by another, and the people leave, not having necessarily heard more truth, but they go away feeling lifted up, refreshed, renewed, energised; yes, something has been done. The difference is that one has been giving doctrine and the other has been giving revelation, what was given by the Holy Spirit in revelation — not something apart from the Word, but something that comes out of the Word. The Lord Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life”, and when the Lord speaks the effect is spirit and life. That is the difference between mere truth as such, and revelation by the Holy Spirit.

Now you are able surely to discern between the two. When you really come into an Ephesian position, when the Lord brings you there by opening the heavens to you and reveals that to you, it is as if you knew nothing before. As one has often said, for years one preached on Ephesians, analysed Ephesians on the blackboard and gave all the content of the letter to the Ephesians, and with a great deal of energy, believing it all, but the day came when Ephesians was revealed and it was as if nothing about Ephesians was known at all. It makes such a difference in one’s life and ministry. People begin to say, “What has happened? He is saying the same things as he used to say but there is a difference.” That is it, the difference between the letter and the Spirit; truth and revelation. In this ministry we need to come up on to higher ground. Ask the Lord to bring you up on to higher ground in this matter, off the mere doctrinal ground on to ground of revelation and you will be surprised at the difference in effectiveness and power.

Then the fifth feature is the *power of resurrection*. In this mountain “the Lord of Hosts hath swallowed up death for ever.” What is the counterpart in Ephesians? “The exceeding greatness of His power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.” That power is to “usward who believe” in this mountain; the power of resurrection; the power of life triumphant over death. That relates to the high ground of a spiritual position. That is the testimony which is raised by a spiritual ascendancy on the part of the Lord’s people. Paul was ever seeking to attain more fully to that eminence. Right up to the last it was as though he were climbing. Some of his last words are about the “upward calling” and you see him in mighty spiritual exercise to get to the summit; “to know the power of His resurrection”, reaching to the very pinnacle. There is something Paul has not attained unto and he says, “Not as though I had already attained, but leaving the things which are behind I press on”; it is the upward calling and belongs to the heights. It is no small thing to come to the place where the power of His resurrection begins to be displayed, where we begin to know the might of His triumph over death, where death is swallowed up for ever. Blessed be God, that is true at the beginning of our faith. Calvary

secures all for us; the gift of eternal life; but there is something more in the expression of that eternal life. There is a continuous development in the manifestation of that life triumphant over death. The apostle says, "As always, even now, Christ should be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." Christ magnified — that is the power of His life triumphant over death. The Lord is never magnified in a body in death unless life is triumphant over death. If death swallows up life Christ is not magnified. The Lord is magnified in death being swallowed up by life. We are come to mount Zion. Revelation 21:2 says, "He showed me the great city, New Jerusalem ...". And what follows? "No more death": death is swallowed up for ever. It is a feature of Zion, a characteristic of the New Jerusalem, life, where death is no more; and the Lord would call us up there on to higher ground. If the Lord is calling us up there, and it is His desire, He makes possible what He wills.

This is not something towards which we ourselves have to struggle. This is the very work that the Holy Spirit has come to do as the Spirit of life: to manifest Christ as life victorious over death in us. We have to be exercised in faith to appropriate that. It is the appropriation of faith, to take; the Holy Spirit's work is to make the victory of our Lord Jesus over death manifest in us. Oh, that we should be sufficiently impressed with the Lord's desire for this, and what the Lord desires He always makes possible. Each one of us is called by the Lord into this great ministry of displaying to the universe Christ's triumph in resurrection over the power of death. That has got to have a beginning now. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. That will take place when the church is perfected, completed; then death will be swallowed up for ever. There will be no more death; death will be broken by Christ through His body eventually, and the ascension and the rapture is an indication of that mighty victory where death is set aside altogether. You get your foreshadowing type of that in Enoch. By faith Enoch walked with God and "he was not; for God took him", and we have noted how all the verses of that fifth chapter of Genesis end with "and he died" and then suddenly, "Enoch walked with God ... God took him", and then it goes on again, "and he died". And in his walk with God Enoch learned this secret that God is able to set death aside and he believed God on that matter and he proved God on that matter by his faith and was translated and became a foreshadowing of the church which has such faith for translation.

Paul, as a minister of that life, says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." That life which is deathless life, I live by faith. By faith Enoch lived that life and overcame death. Paul was never forced to die. When they executed Paul, it was not because he was a helpless prisoner and could not say

no. It was because God's time had come; he said, "the time of my departure is at hand ... there is laid up for me a crown of life (righteousness)." Paul knew his time had come. This life cannot be destroyed by death and no man can take this divine life away, and we cannot be killed until God's time has come, and then it is not death — it is triumphant life. You see the principle at work, death swallowed up in the victory of Calvary for the believer. Do you believe that? Do you take that high ground? It is high ground to take for the Lord's children when they are passing into what is called "the shadow of death", that it shall not engulf them, that it shall not wrap itself round them and make for darkness. We ought to stand on that ground for ourselves, that it shall not be death even though we pass out by way of the grave; it shall be the triumph of life. It is high ground to take, and our testimony is that Jesus swallowed up death in victory. "The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe ...".

The sixth feature is: *comfort for the disappointed*. "God shall wipe away all tears"; this is a feature of the mountain of Zion. Why these tears? What is the cause of these tears? We sing, "The church's one foundation", and before we get through we reach words which say, "And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song." What is the cause of the weeping in this particular connection?

*"Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed"* etc.

It is the disappointing state of things that causes the grief, such a disappointing state of things. Paul shed many tears for the Corinthians' divisions and schisms and the low level of things among the Lord's people. If there is any cause for tears it is that. I wonder if you ever have inward tears about the spiritual condition of things amongst the Lord's people. I wonder if you have ever had such keen interest among the Lord's people as to feel anything like tears about the state of things. I wonder if you know what He would have among His people so that you are able to see the difference. You know nothing about the ecstasy unless you know something about the travail. The wiping away of tears is not because of personal griefs and sorrows, it is bound up with the church, the body of Christ. When we come to God's position, God's standard, then these earth things give place. When the apostle can get the Corinthians off that low level on to higher level his tears will be dry. When these carnal elements are set aside by the cross and we know one another no longer after the flesh, then there will be a good deal of drying of tears, putting away of grief and sorrow caused by this state of things. There will be great joy. I believe one of the joys into which we shall enter at last will be the joy of seeing the

completeness and perfection of the work of grace in God's people in making them so completely one. On earth we experience many divisions and many heartbreaks and then at last we will find not one slightest strain or division. All will be governed by the most perfect divine love; there will be no more tears. When we come to God's place it makes a big difference. If we could come on to higher ground, that higher ground of fellowship and love, God shall wipe away all tears. The cause of these tears is banished when you come up on to God's level of the church's life and fellowship.

The next thing we notice in Isaiah 25 is *power over the enemy*. Absolute triumph over the work of the enemy is in that chapter. When you come to Ephesians you know quite well in the sixth chapter you are getting into the high places where our wrestling is with principalities and powers; not a conflict unto defeat but of spiritual ascendancy because already in that letter we have been "seated with Christ far above ...". He has been raised and seated at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers. Then chapter 2 brings us to be seated with Him. Chapter 6, conflict, as far above, with the principalities and powers. It is a picture of ascendancy over the enemy which is for the Lord's people. Conflict, but conflict from a position of advantage, the heavenly ground of spiritual union with Christ. There is victory over the enemy in this mountain. Ephesian position is required for Ephesian power in this mountain. The enemy has got to be defeated in the high places, and for us it is in the high places that he makes his attack. The Lord Jesus met him in the high places and we have to meet him there in the power of Christ's victory. Now there are all sorts of high places revealed in the Word of God as aspects of this conflict with the enemy, and victory over him. But I want to indicate how practical this thing is by suggesting one or two. The Lord Jesus defeated him in the high places. Right in the beginning of His ministry we are told the enemy took Him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and said, "All these will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me, for they have been delivered unto me", and the Lord Jesus never disputed that statement. The Word bears out the truth of it: "The whole world lies in the wicked one"; "The prince of this world". It is in the enemy's power to give position in this world, to give advantage in this world. We cannot understand the power of that temptation to the Lord Jesus, that it was a real temptation in this way. It was for that very purpose that He was born, that He had in His very being a sense of an eternal destiny to be the Ruler of the kingdoms of this world, and that He had come here for that, and there lay before Him a way of unspeakable suffering to secure them. And the enemy comes along and in effect says, "Why suffer to have them; why endure all that to have them; why go that way to have them? Recognise my lordship and you can have them as a gift."

What is it that lies in that temptation on that high mountain? It is the

temptation to take the lesser ground to save ourselves from suffering and to gain advantage. Now that is a temptation that comes to the people of high places. People do that in the low places without very much temptation, but there is an acuteness about that temptation to the people of the high places. Come up into the high places and you find yourself against desperate adversity. You have to pay a great price to come out there with the Lord. The suffering is not little suffering. You meet things against you from every direction when you are going right on with the Lord. You have to make all kinds of sacrifices that other people who live on the lower plane do not make. Out here you meet the full force of things, and the enemy sometimes comes along with the temptation to compromise. All this is looking you right in the face and you are feeling the acuteness of the path you have taken and he says, "Make a little compromise, come down on to a little lower level and you can save yourself a lot of suffering and gain your end just as well." To compromise to save ourselves from suffering is a temptation. You can put it in many ways. If you are going to stand absolutely and utterly and uncompromisingly for the Testimony of Jesus it is going to cost you. If you do not stand so utterly it will not cost you so much and you will have a good deal of present blessing, but the realization of your ends is suspended. If you take the utter stand, it lies at the end of a course of suffering and pain; it is an unseen thing. If you will come on to the lower level you can have a good deal now without the suffering.

People who have gone right out with the Lord know that temptation, the temptation to compromise in order to be delivered from the acuteness of the suffering and in order to have things now instead of waiting for them until later on. Yes, the Lord met that temptation in the high place. In that high place He triumphed over the enemy but He took all the power of that thing to another high place, Calvary, and He met the enemy there and triumphed not only over his temptation but over his authority and power, and broke his dominion and got the kingdoms of this world without any compromise at all. At great cost He is uncompromising and gained over the enemy the dominion of this world. He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And you have to keep your high place against all the subtle temptation of the enemy to come down to the lesser. You have to be uncompromising if you are going to reign.

It is unthinkable what would have happened if the Lord Jesus had bowed to the devil. We cannot think of it as a possibility. We know that the first Adam lost the dominion and we see the result of that. What would have happened if the last Adam had bowed to him? But He did not. He paid the price. He kept His high ground and would not come down. He triumphed and has the kingdoms in spite of the enemy. "If we suffer we shall reign", if we maintain this high ground uncompromisingly we shall have the kingdom. The kingdoms of this world which are the kingdoms of our God and His Christ will be given

to us to rule over. He will say unto one, "Have rule over ten cities" and I shall come along one day and see some of you as kings over ten cities, over five cities; but that represents a spiritual position. Alongside of it we are going to have position in the eternal kingdom according to our present position of ascendancy and government in Christ. We must come up on to high ground in this matter of victory over the enemy.

I would like to refer to another high place, 1 Kings 19. You remember after Carmel, (a great victory on a high place), Elijah had slain the prophets of Baal and it says, "Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done ... (Jezebel) sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them ...". Under the threat Elijah collapsed, and he went down on to low ground and you find him under a juniper tree. You are on low ground if ever you get under a juniper tree. What can the Lord do with a man like that? The angel of the Lord touched this man who was so low down, and said, "Arise, eat", and as he woke up he saw a meal prepared for him and he ate; he must be fortified again, and then the word "Arise and go", and where did he go? To Horeb, the mount of God. He must come from his low place to a mount, he must get on to higher ground than that; the Lord cannot do anything there for a man. "What doest thou here Elijah?" and he pours out his complaint. When he came to the mount of God, to Horeb, behold the Lord passed by, and there was a great tempest, thunder, wind and an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the wind, not in the tempest, not in the earthquake. But afterwards there was a voice, as the margin says, "a gentle stillness", and the Lord was in the voice. I do not know that I am fully assured of what the meaning of that tempest and wind and earthquake is, but I think I have had some experience that indicates something, at any rate. When the Lord is going to speak to revive, to re-commission and put us on our feet again, there is very often a terrific onrush of thunder, and lightening and earthquake beforehand. The Lord would call us to higher ground, put us on our feet. Perhaps some of you are disappointed, cast down, feeling as Elijah did, that you are the only one left, no one else has felt as you have, no one else has suffered as you are suffering, you have a loneliness complex; and the Lord is calling us up on higher ground to re-commission us.

Elijah, abandoning his commission, had to come up and have it renewed. This awful storm came and the Holy Spirit caused it to be written, "The Lord was not in the wind ... not in the earthquake." They raged but God was not in them; God was in the still voice of gentle stillness. Maybe that storm was a reflection of what was going on inside the prophet, the tempest raging and the Lord would say to him, with all this terrific crashing of the thunder, "What doest thou here Elijah?" So kind, so gentle, such a contrast to the storm. I am sure the voice of gentle stillness struck the stormy feelings of the prophet and

made him feel subdued and quiet before the Lord. The Lord spoke quietly, in a voice of stillness over against the tempest and recommissioned Elijah. The Lord cannot do anything with us while there is a raging storm inside, an earthquake inside. We have to be quiet. The Lord speaks gently and recommissions and tells us the next thing to be done in relation to the eternal purpose. He puts us on our feet and says, “Go and do this and that”, and not least among those things was, “and anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy place.” That was not a small thing: Elisha, the only prophet in Israel who was ever anointed. It was on the higher ground where the enemy was defeated, the enemy who had come out to destroy that soul, who had threatened his undoing, who had pressed so hard as to have almost shattered and broken him. But the Lord called him up into a higher place and put him on his feet. The enemy’s power was broken at Horeb, as in the mount of temptation, and Calvary. The power over all the power of the enemy demands that we should come on higher ground with the Lord. It is the Ephesian position again, high ground with the Lord and victory over all the work of the devil. Do you want to know that? Well, it represents higher ground. It means we have to come up higher in our spiritual life; we have to take ascendancy in the Name of the Lord. We have to have a higher moral life, which is bound up with the spiritual life, by which the enemy’s work is brought to nought.

The Lord write in our hearts that He is calling us on to higher ground for His eternal purpose.

(to be continued)