

THE SAINT'S BEST,—PREPARED, PROMISED,

AND

GIVEN.

A

Sermon

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,  
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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1st, 1884.

"And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."— {Matthew. {20: 23}.

Although the disciples were near to the Master when He was here in the flesh, many of their views and thoughts concerning Him were exceedingly carnal. They regarded Him not only as the promised Messiah, but as a temporal Prince; for He was in point of fact, the Son of David. They were looking that He should become the King of the Jews, assume the reins of government, and literally ascend His father David's throne. Therefore they said, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?" This was the case on this

interesting occasion, when the mother of Zebedee's children brought her two sons to Jesus and said to Him, " Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." The feelings of the mother ran in the general course, concerning the temporal reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her thoughts on this particular occasion had respect to Christ's ministers of state, and therefore being actuated in some measure by sentiments of ambition and pride, she desired to speak in time, especially as Jesus had manifested a peculiar partiality for James and John. "Grant that these my two sons may sit on Thy right hand, and on the left in Thy kingdom." And Jesus said, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said, We are able." The Master said, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." You are My followers, and members of My mystical body ; you are My servants, and sons of God, and you must be conformed to Me in suffering as well as in spirituality and holiness, and therefore you shall drink of My cup and be baptized with My baptism. I have to drink of the cup of persecution, and to be baptized with the baptism of suffering and sorrow, and in the world ye shall have tribulation; nevertheless "to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine," as Man, as Mediator, apart from My Father, to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of Him.

Let us look at the latter part of the verse: "To sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them

for whom it is prepared." In the first place, let us direct our attention to the interesting and glorious privilege indicated here, viz., that of sitting on the right hand, and on the left of the Lord Jesus Christ in His kingdom. I shall make no critical observations on the right and the left hands of the Lord Jesus: therefore we notice, first, that we have here the idea of eternal nearness to our Lord. If we in His kingdom sit on His right hand, and on His left, as it were, we shall be for ever near to Him, and nearer to Him than we can possibly be here. I do hope that most of my hearers this morning know what it is occasionally to be near to the Lord, and to hold sweet fellowship with God, in and through Him. You know what it is to enter into your closets, to leave the world outside, to rise above the influence of your circumstances, and to have communion with the dear Redeemer. How sweet are the moments when all one's thoughts are absorbed in the Saviour, and one's heart is lost as it were, in the grace of Immanuel. "That is fanaticism, sir." No; it is a part of the occasional experience of the beloved people of God; and if on earth, by faith, it is so sweet to sit at Jesus' feet, what must it be to "sit on His right hand, and on His left," in the eternal felicity of heaven, where we shall be near Him as we cannot be near to Him here! We shall be personally near to Him; our minds will be near to His; our bodies will be near to His, and we shall be for ever within sight of the beloved Son of God. We shall see Him for ever; for nothing will ever arise in that blessed world to divert our attention from the glorious Immanuel. Certain persons are near to Her Majesty the Queen; but the great majority of her subjects are at a great distance from her. The persons nearest to her are the Royal

Family. Then many persons in official positions, as statesmen and others, are near to her, and various servants are in the royal palace, while outside is the nation itself. But all the people of God will be for ever near to the Redeemer. One will not be farther from Him than another. You are ready to say, "You cannot explain that mystery." I am glad I cannot. Our bodies and our souls will be universally spiritual; and what it is to be absolutely free from corruption, and from the flesh and blood which cannot enter into the kingdom of God, I do not yet know; but if we are saints, our bodies shall be made like unto the glorious body of the Redeemer; and then with millions of other happy saints, we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. We shall enter heaven and see Christ as He is, and be like Him for ever. Here we meet together in God's house, and catch a glimpse of heaven, and of the Saviour, and then He disappears again, or at all events, we cease to see Him; and hence the complaint:—

*"I count it long since I received
A visit from the Lord."*

But having entered heaven, and taken our seats in the presence of the Redeemer, we shall rest for ever. There we shall for ever view His face, meditate upon His grace, contemplate His charms, and so to speak, for ever lose ourselves in His boundless and mysterious grandeur and glory. And is it not a position of honor, to sit on the right hand and on the left of Jesus for ever? No trace of sin and guilt will appear, and no taint of iniquity. All shall be pure as the Son of God, and holy and transparent as Immanuel Himself; and no spot or

blemish will ever appear upon them. What must it be to be free from sin, absolutely free from all marks of transgression and iniquity! Here we pray, and sometimes send all our thoughts for a few moments up to heaven, and then Satan comes and diverts our minds, interferes with our communion with God, and interrupts our joy. But then there will be no corruption in the soul, no depravity in our nature, and no remains of sin left, and therefore there will be eternal honor as well as eternal nearness to the Saviour. A spot in heaven would un-paradise the place. A blot upon the character, or upon the person of one of God's dear people, would leave peace and joy impossible. It is the determination of God so to wash every saint in the blood of the Lamb, as to remove every stain, and so to work by His Spirit in every heart, as to make every saint all- glorious within. There we shall be as if the fall had never taken place, and we had never sinned. Yet we shall never forget the fall, nor our sinner-ship, our vileness, our uncleanness, our character as fallen creatures, and hence the song will be "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood."

But, in the next place, so to sit in heaven with our Lord indicates eternal rest. There God's people rest from their labors, in the place which has been prepared for them. Here we are weary ; for we are journeying towards home and eternity, and we are oft times, if one may speak for others, cast down and distressed, because we cannot see our signs, and wonder whether our religion be genuine or not. I shall not preach so as to encourage doubts and fears; and yet I would never discourage those who have them, for I have no whip for fearing

and doubting ones. I know you would not fear or doubt if you could help it: but this is the experience of many of the people of God. Oh! it is hard to be godly ; for it is to be in the field of conflict, and to be engaged in battle from day to day. There is always something to fight against, and always something to oppose; but the time is coming when all that shall cease. The journey of life will be ended, the work done, the weariness past and gone, and the ransomed spirit shall glide confidently and righteously out of the body into a better world, and into the presence of the Redeemer. Some have said that they should be satisfied if they might only step over the threshold of glory and stand at a distance from the Master, and see His face in that position. You would not be satisfied in such a position, if there be such a place in heaven; and Christ would not be satisfied to see you there: for all are loved with all the love of God; and therefore, having passed over the threshold of glory you will go at once to your seats, for they have been prepared for you; for; It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." You shall go to your seats, and God shall place upon you the crowns of eternal righteousness, and you will rest in the presence of your best Beloved for ever. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Rest. What a sweet word! Rest. What a gracious blessing it is to come into the house of God and rest in His presence for half-an-hour; to leave the world on a Thursday, or some other evening, and enter into God's courts, to shake off the dust of business, and to cease to hear the noise and strife of life, to sit at God's feet, to receive a shower of Divine blessing, and to be fertilized by God Himself! How sweet it is

by faith to enter into rest in this world of turmoil and trouble! What must it be to be in heaven, and to rest from our labors in the presence of our best Beloved! This "shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." A last idea here will be that of permanence. "To sit on My right hand and on My left." The posture is an everlasting one; for the soul in the presence of Jesus is eternally there. "They shall go no more out for ever." Shut in by God in the best world in the universe, and seated before Him, there to remain for ever. No Sabbath evenings, and no Monday mornings there. Monday morning now comes, when we go into the cold, dusty, bustling world, where our minds become withered and our spirituality is weakened; hence we want reviving in our bondage, and renewing by the Holy Spirit again and again. But there congregations never break up, and the Sabbath has no end. Weariness and drowsiness will never be felt, but

*" There we shall sit and sing away,
A long and everlasting day."*

A cup of sweets without a bitter, a day that will last for ever, a Sun that will always shine, and rivers of pleasure that will ever flow, even the rivers of God's pleasure of which we shall drink for ever. Joy so great, and yet without an end. Peace so deep, and yet never to be disturbed. Tranquility and serenity so pure, heavenly, and Divine, and nothing in all that vast world prepared by God to interrupt, or ruffle, or disturb it.

*"A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land us on fair Canaan's coast."
" There we shall see His face,*

*And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."*

All this is a Divine gift. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Talk about earning glory! About deserving it! About meriting it! About working for God, and bringing Him under something like obligations to the creature! Let such words never fall from our lips, and such thoughts never enter our minds. There is no proportion between the heaven of glory, and the services, the sufferings, and the sorrows of God's people here. No, it is all a gift. A kingdom given; not to be divided among many, but a kingdom given to each and everyone. Everyone shall be a king, and every seat shall be a throne, and every inheritance shall be a kingdom, and all shall be given by God Himself. But how given? Oh, so lovingly! You know there is much in the manner in which a gift is bestowed upon a receiver. You may meet a poor, needy being, and throw a shilling or even half a crown into his lap, or his hand, in a manner which almost prevents him thanking you; or you may give him a sixpence, or even a less sum than that, with a smile upon your countenance, and a tone of tenderness in your voice which will almost break his heart. How will God give you a crown, and a throne, and a kingdom ? With all His heart, with an eternal smile upon His countenance. He is resolved to do you good, according to His resources and ability; in fact, to do for you all that it is possible for a God to do for creatures such as we. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." But where is all this to be enjoyed and experienced? Not here, but there;

not in this world, but in that which is to come. Some persons and I think their minds must be very dry, are almost always speculating as to the future of this world, as to what God (intends to do with it. I am sure I do not wish to be wise above what is written, and am perfectly satisfied to keep within the covers of this book. I am told that heaven has been prepared by God for sinners saved by grace; and therefore, I am expecting to go to heaven, so far as I can believe that I am a child of God. I do not think our Lord will come down and pitch His tabernacle in the land of Canaan, and call His people together in the city of Jerusalem, which would not hold a millionth part of them; neither do I believe He will come down and convert the world into an Eden. As for the millennium, (and I do not wish to needlessly offend,) that Christ will come and live and reign a thousand years on the earth, I do not know whether it will be so, or not; I can only say as the good Suffolk minister said, "If He should come and dwell with us a thousand years, we shall all be glad to see Him." Should He come and dwell with us here, we shall be delighted to sit on His right hand and on His left. I am not looking for that, however, neither can I speculate in those matters. He is gone to heaven, to prepare a place for His people, and has said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." And so far only am I expecting to see Him again in this world. "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Well, it will be in heaven and not here, in that kingdom which God has prepared.

Let us now notice in the third place the preparation indicated. I have been trying to set forth the privilege and the gift, but we have

also the preparation indicated. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." And when was it prepared? Very early, even before the foundation of the world. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It appears, then, that heaven was the first world God made; for He had built heaven, that great and glorious place, and brought that marvelous kingdom and inheritance of saints into existence before the foundation of the world. And therefore Christ is represented as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And how was it prepared ? According to the resources of our heavenly Father. The man who is about to become a husband provides, or it is presumed that he provides, as good a home for his wife and for himself with her, as he can, and that his home bears some proportion to his ability and resources. The father is supposed to do the very best he can for his son and for his children; and you may apply this to your Father in heaven. The preparation of heaven by God for you, bears a perfect proportion to the resources and ability of your God; and I sometimes look at the world we live in, and through which we are passing, and say, if God has made a world so good, so great, and so excellent as this for men as creatures, and if He continues so to fill it with His goodness for men, though they are sinners, what must that world be which He has prepared for His dear people! All His resources are infinite and were united and inseparably engaged in preparing heaven for you and me. We shall find in heaven that which will meet every want, that which will drown every desire, that which will realize every hope, and that which will leave prayer, petition, and

expectation impossible. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Well, my friends this place has been prepared for us, and. promised to us, and opened for us, and our faces have been turned towards this inheritance and we are journeying to the place of which God has said, I will give it to thee. I think it was last Lord's-day, in the hall yonder, that I referred to the fact that probably I had, since I had been in London, buried almost as many persons as were then present before me, and I do not think I exaggerated. I have buried a great many saints during the thirty-three years or thereabouts that I have ministered to the people here. They are gone not from my thoughts or yours, not from our affections, not from our feelings, not from our gratitude. We see them now, and our fancy or imagination tries to paint them, if I may so speak, as they now appear in heaven. They are there in the place appointed or prepared for them; for the place is prepared for the people, and the people are prepared for the place.

Look in the fourth place at the promise. We have looked at the privilege of living near to Christ for ever. We have turned our attention to the gift and the Divine preparation of the place, and now for the promise. It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." God's promises are sweet, they melt the saints to tears. Promises that relate to our pilgrimage, and to our passing through the water and the fire, are very sweet and precious: but what about this promise? "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Then heaven is sure, and eternal glory is absolutely certain; the perseverance of the saints of God is certain, and it ought to be

regarded as a fact beyond dispute. "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God has given a promise, which is a representation and expression of His purpose, and He will never alter His mind, and here we have the testimony of Him who is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. It shall be given to them. Look at this promise, first in relation to the Father Himself; He has prepared the place, and given a promise: and can the place be unoccupied? There are the seats and thrones, and shall they too be vacant? Was there not a fixedness of purpose in the mind of God, when He prepared the seats and the place for His dear people? Did He not resolve so to arrange all matters of providence and grace that every saint should arrive in heaven and be seated in His presence? My beloved friends, the promise considered in relation to the Father must be fulfilled. Again, look at it in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has emphatically said, 4 i It shall be given." " Not Mine to give He does not mean that He has not power to give it, for He will be engaged in giving the seats to His beloved people; but it will be in harmony with His Father, and with the Holy Spirit,—not Mine officially to give. " It shall be given for whom it is prepared of My Father. I do not know that I need to stay here to allude to Arianism and Socinianism. Some of you know that Socinians take this portion of the Word of God to prove what they assert as a fact, that Jesus Christ is not God, since he says here that it is not His to give places at His right hand and His left; but that it is given of the Father. Yet Christ never contradicted Himself. "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.

All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Me." Jesus Christ is equal with the Father. He was here speaking of Himself as man and Mediator, and as filling an important office in connection with the salvation of His people. It was My Father's office and work to prepare the place, My office and work to redeem the people from all evil, and the office and work of the Holy Spirit to prepare them for the place, and "it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." Look at the subject or the promise in relation to the Holy Spirit. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." And what does the Apostle refer to? "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God and He that hath wrought us for that building, "a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens," is God. The house is ready and the seats are ready, but at present they are vacant. A work is going on in our souls which we did not commence, which hell has opposed ever since it was commenced, and the influence of which often draws us in an attempt to call in prayer upon God. This work within sometimes brings tears into our eyes as well as cares into our hearts. And what of all this? The place there is prepared, and the people here are being prepared for .the place, and over the people in whom the work is going on we read this promise: "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Look at the promise in relation to the people themselves, and then finally, in relation to our enemies. Hell opposes. It shall be given notwithstanding. I have a deep sense of my vileness and unworthiness.

"Hardly sure can they be worse,

Who have never known His name."

Yet it shall be given. But you do not know my unbelief, how deep my fears are, how high my doubts are; and if you could see what goes on within, you would not have a word of encouragement for me." But it shall be given. The home is a gift, and the gift is absolutely certain; for "it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." Many have entered the heavens of glory since they were first opened, and God opened them for the sake of His beloved Son, immediately after the fall, when He gave the first promise. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Abel, the martyr, was the first saint that breathed out his soul into the hands of his covenant God, and entered heaven, and took his seat; and he was followed by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are seated with their Lord; and millions, perhaps, have entered since,

"And we are to the margin come,

And soon expect to die."

I shall not be thirty-three years longer preaching the gospel, for only the fag end of my life remains. My hair is grey, and years are increasing upon me and infirmities also. Now is my salvation nearer than when I first believed. Oh may it be mine to die in the everlasting arms of God, and in possession of that sweet and simple faith which God has promised His people shall then be blessed with. Then in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, but shall peacefully and calmly slide out of this poor, vile body into the presence of the Lord. Instead of the fathers shall come up the children; and they in their turn shall become fathers and pass away into the eternal glory of

God. The stream of saints is always coming and going. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."

Lastly, the people themselves, "for whom, it is prepared of My Father." What shall we say about the people? Two things are upon my mind, or I have only time to mention two. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, if you want evidences, there are two. Poor in spirit. Are you rich? are you full ? are you great ? are you satisfied ? Are you not rather poor in spirit? not poor in circumstances ; not poor-spirited, but poor in spirit. Well, what follows? "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." You may be too rich, but you cannot be too poor; too fat, but you cannot be too lean; too strong, but you cannot be too weak. Oh for more grace to reduce us to nothing, in order that we may be found among the poor in spirit, for whom the Father has prepared the kingdom of heaven. And then the pure in heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart." Their hearts are not absolutely, universally pure, yet they are pure in heart so far as their desires go. You would from this moment, if it might be so, be pure and spotless, and white, like your Lord. a Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And what operations are now going on in relation to this promise? The Holy Ghost is at work, and I trust He will descend and work in this renovated place of worship. A good many souls have been saved in this sanctuary, and many saved souls have been helped and blessed here. Let us pray for a large out-pouring of the Spirit, that the Word may be applied to sinners as well as to saints. The operations of Providence are going on for the

purpose of fulfilling the promises. Christ is interceding in heaven, and His intercession keeps pilgrims on their feet, and sojourners travelling forward towards their eternal rest and home. The ordinances of God's house, the means of grace, the ministry of the word, and the attendance of angels, are fulfilling the word. "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." Then for the consummation when all the work is done, and all the people are at home, or ready to be taken home and all the family are prepared for glory. Oh! what a scene it will be for assembled worlds, for fearing, trembling devils, and for millions of ungodly sinners, to see all the family of God free from fear, and doubt, and stain, all following their great delivering Saviour to their respective places, and all seated round about the throne of God and the Lamb, to drink in eternal pleasures from the Son of God in the world prepared for them.

*"When God makes up His last account,
Of natives in His holy mount,
'Twill be an honor to appear
As one new-born and nourished there."*

The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.