

[Dreams & Visions]
[Purifying the House of God]

A Rock Garden

“A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock garden locked up.”¹

John Stone

¹ Song of Songs 4:12

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Introduction

The five supernatural events described herein are reconstructed as accurately as my skills allow. While I tried to tell each precisely as it happened, I don't know all they portend. My understandings are limited by the state of my soul—a construction zone where even the angels wear hardhats.

The three dreams and two visions recounted occurred over a 40- or 50-day period. Each one was a God-bomb that blew apart pet paradigms. As soon as I regained some sense of equilibrium from one roadside explosion, another God-bomb would unexpectedly detonate and undo me again. Like a wrecking ball crashing through my bedroom window, these Providential demolitions altered my outlook. They brought down high places. I endured. Enduring was the best I could do throughout this ***“time to tear down.”***²

Across the seven- or eight-week trial my thoughts were so distant that I could only haltingly communicate. I walked in a daze. My wife expressed her concerns.

When the dust finally settled, I saw something new. I saw that I am a house of God and that the zeal that the Lord has for His house still consumes Him.³ He still flips tables and wields a whip to drive out that which is unclean. His house will be clean.⁴

Looking back I can also see that one or two of these supernatural experiences are spiritual summaries of fiery trials I endured in the natural realm, trials that at times seemed like riding a one-way elevator down into the basement of hell.⁵ St. Peter writes, ***“it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God.”***⁶ That judgment has started with me.

These dreams and visions also foreshadow ‘times to tear down’ that are ordained to come upon us all. God’s house will be clean, your house and my house included. So if you don’t own a hardhat, beloved, go get one.⁷

² Proverbs 3:3

³ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; John 2:15-17

⁴ Zechariah 13:1-2

⁵ 1 Peter 4:12-14

⁶ 1 Peter 4:17

⁷ Revelation 3:17-19

1. *My Judgment*

In the first dream of God's judgment I found myself sitting alone in an endless blue sky. Not a cloud to be seen. Nothing existed but a smiling me in a powdery sky. Alone and contented, all seemed fine. Then with the suddenness of a flipped switch, the atmosphere changed. My party was disrupted by waves of discomfiting energy. At first this disturbance arrived like ripples onto a sandy shore. But the ripples quickly grew into waves and the waves rose to a furious sea. The party was over.

The waves tore into my sky-blue seams. Their crashing upon me grew fearsome and I grew afraid. As my world broke apart, I could tell that these malevolent waves were only the vanguard of peril, and this ripping, only the start of destruction. The outer bands of this hurricane dashed me about, and the catastrophic eye wall was aiming for me. I was its target. There was no escape from this coming Power. No defense. No appeasement. Dread overwhelmed me. I would not endure to the end.⁸ I kept struggling, but my struggling was that of a man who knows he's doomed.

Then an unexpected sun-drop arose from my failing heart. This ray of hope was the realization of Who was aiming at me; it was the Judge of judges. Boring down on me in a fury was the One my heart desired. Akin to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, this coming Terror was also the Lover of my soul. The God who was intently ripping me apart was also the One who loves me more than His own life. As my world fell apart, as I was dying, this realization made me a man of two minds. I was desirous of judgment and simultaneously terrified at its coming. It was for me as the Psalmist says; ***“My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments. ... Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Your manner of those who love your name” (Psalm 119:120, 132).***

As God's judgment bore down on me, everything that could be shaken, shook. My blue sky cracked apart like a window pane shattered by rocks. My body and soul splintered like a hammered twig. I lost all control. Every cell in my body, every fiber of my being, every memory, experience, thought process and relationship, all of me and all I could conceive of was shaking violently forever apart. My dream of God's judgment was worse than Job described; ***“Dread came upon me, and trembling, and made all my bones shake” (Job 4:14).***

In my dream, the eye-wall of terror was at hand. One moment more and I would explode into nothingness, consumed by a black hole of oblivion. Not even a memory of me would remain. With every last effort I latched onto that silver thread of hope, the hope that Jesus was my Judge. But this seemed too thin a thing to save me. Even with hope, I was hopeless. The Terror was too great. My time was out.

Then a split second before I was to be eternally obliterated, the Hope that I hoped for arrived. It sprung forth from the Terror like an unseen hand. In that hand was something like a surgeon's swift knife. The knife swished once and cut me clean through. As quickly as the Judge arrived and cut me through, He was gone. When He left, everything had completely changed. Only the things in me which were of God, remained. Nothing of me existed but that which was godly. While I was greatly reduced by the cutting, the cutting left me pure and altogether holy. The black parts of me were no more and the part of me that remained was golden.

⁸ Mark 13:13

Finding myself pure and holy, a new, clean joy surged powerfully throughout all that remained of me. I felt free and fully alive, and I was. The terror of destruction had left me in glory, and I felt glorious, inexpressibly more wonderful than the blue-sky feeling I had enjoyed when the dream began. At this point, in my existence in perfect shalom, the dream of my judgment concluded.

***“I know, O Lord, that your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me”
(Psa. 119:75).***

2. *The Handsome Man*

Nine or ten days after the dream of my judgment, I dreamed again. I dreamed I saw a man of intellect and sterling behavior grabbed about his torso by a gigantic right hand. The hand first lifted the man up and then it flung him headlong towards the earth. I watched the man as he hurtled downwards. He was destined to crash simultaneously on his head and left shoulder. His survival was in question, and he knew it. Realizing his plight, the handsome man's face filled with one question, "*What is happening to me?*" He wracked his brain for the answer, trying desperately to understand his predicament so that he could devise some escape from his fast approaching and humiliating end. As he plummeted headlong, three gold coins tumbled from the pants pocket of his three-piece suit. This was all I saw. Watching the handsome man's judgment unfold, I felt emotionally removed, an unsympathetic observer unwilling or unable to offer him assistance. This was all I felt.

In the days following this dream, I learned that the handsome man represents those in God's household who lead in apparent godliness yet mix their personal will with the Divine (Mat. 23:8-12). They rely to some degree upon man's wisdom and natural strengths (1 Cor. 2:12-16). The powerful right hand that first lifts the man high and then flings him down is the hand of God (Heb. 10:29-31). The hand of God is responsible for the man's rise in the Church, and it hurls him down in judgment.

Falling, the handsome man asks himself, "*What is happening to me?*" because he hasn't discerned that he is being judged by God. He doesn't yet understand that his manly powers lack the ability to deliver him from anything. He trusts somewhat in himself. To some degree he is a self-savior. In a similar manner, his heart has not wholly credited God with his rise in the Church. He considers himself more or less responsible for his successes. Leaders like the handsome man have not yet come to terms with their utter dependency upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This despite giving both mental assent and voice to the fact that apart from God, every man is totally wretched and powerless to save (James 2:10; Jer. 17:9).

The three gold coins falling from the handsome man's pocket symbolize his total loss of heavenly rewards, rewards which will not be restored even if he survives his judgment. Church leaders who depend upon worldly wisdom or strength of personality or other natural powers, build on the true foundation of Jesus with wood, hay and straw. They receive no eternal rewards. Fiery judgment separates them from the recompense of their works, and they enter into heaven by the skin of their teeth (1 Cor. 3:12-15; Amos 4:9-11).

The question of the handsome man's survival characterizes the unknown outcome of his judgment. The conclusion is indefinite—he could live or he might die. In the midst of his judgment he has been granted time to humble himself and cry out to Jesus to be saved. This closing window of opportunity to repent is God's mercy. If the man realizes his inability to deliver himself before he crashes into the earth and if he cries out to Jesus for salvation, then despite the dashing he will live and not die. One way or the other, the handsome man will suffer severe judgment. How the judgment works in him is dependent upon how he receives it.

I have been the handsome man, a church leader who built a ministry by worldly wits and not through reliance on the Holy Spirit. What I erected on the true Foundation of Jesus was wood, hay and straw. Before God flung me down in judgment He said, "You have done this [ministry] by your power. Now I am going to teach you to do things by My power." A few days after hearing these words, I was no longer a church leader. A judgment, a cutting out of the wickedness within me had begun, and it hurt.

“Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord saying, ‘Is not the Lord in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us’ ” (Micah 3:11).

3. *The Great Hall*

In the third dream of judgment, I found myself standing near a stage in a great hall. The hall was structurally complete but unfinished. It lacked paint, light fixtures, polished floors, furniture, trim work, etc. Low ambient light hid from view the length and width of the hall. What I could see was a portion of the empty stage and a few folding chairs scattered about. But even if the hall were properly lit, I don't think I could have seen from one end to the other. The place was massive.

As I stood near the stage, my mind's eye 'saw' five men gathered somewhere further back in the hall. As crazy as it sounds, I was having a vision in the midst of a dream. The dimness and size of the hall hid these men from my natural eyesight, but my mind's eye 'saw' that they were serious men. They were strong men, the best kind. The serious men were dressed in clean clothes, the modest type a working man might wear to visit friends. By their postures and physiques I could tell they were familiar with hard work. By their quiet confidence I sensed they knew their crafts well. They listened to one another closely, speaking when necessary.

The serious men stood in an informal circle discussing their work. These old friends were more intent on their strategies than on enjoying one another's company. They knew it wasn't time for leisure. It was time for work. Each had different responsibilities and each held a different title or rank. That others recognized their God-given authority was of no importance to them. What mattered to the serious men was getting their jobs done well. This included working in concert. They had gathered in the hall to coordinate their next round of efforts outside the hall.

Their ability to enter into the hall and meet was as natural to these Church leaders as it would be for corporate officers to gather in a boardroom. They held the keys to the place. Each was an expert in his aspect of the business at hand. As soon as their meeting concluded they would exit the hall and continue their work in the outside world. Each one of the men represented either apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers— not that these men cared a whit about titles (Eph. 4:11). They were working men who cared about getting their jobs done well. Their concern was advancing the Kingdom. The word *duty* was to them, sublime. They were anointed by God for the offices they held.

Immediately after 'seeing' the serious men I noticed a bookish young man wandering about in the hall's gloom. He stopped six or eight feet from where I stood near the stage. He looked lost. Although we faced one another and I could clearly see him, he could not see me. I was hesitant to speak because I sensed it would agitate him. I kept quiet.

Looking at him I could tell that this young man paid close attention to his appearance, both to his intellectual grooming and to his attire. He wore white-collar clothes and scholarly glasses. His stature was medium-small with smallish shoulders set over a slight stomach. He had chosen his clothes and practiced his mannerisms to garner the acceptance of his peers. He depended upon their acceptance and encouragement. He told himself that their affirmation was the praise of God. But the words of his peers, like those of his own soul, were uninspired. They were of the flesh, not the Spirit. Looking closer, I noticed the young man's soft hands and manicured nails. I could tell that while he had studied great ideas, he had never raked his neighbor's yard or shined his neighbor's shoes. He had never bent his back in obedience to the Second Great Command although he could quote it by heart. One might imagine that he aspired to be lifted up like the handsome man but dodge his ignoble fate.

In such a sorry state the young man would never recognize one of the serious men as a great leader in the Kingdom. They didn't fit his bill for great men of God. They didn't look like gifted leaders. They didn't talk like studied men. Although the young man desperately needed their ministries, he would be hard-pressed to hear from any one of the serious men. If the young man didn't soon get spiritually attuned, he would never achieve his goal of becoming great in the Kingdom.

Uncertain as to who or what else might be in the dimness, and uncomfortable remaining any longer in proximity to this easily agitated youth, I pulled one of the folding chairs over to the nearest wall and sat down with my back to the wall. In the low light I could no longer see the young man or anyone else. I didn't mind being alone. It would give me time to reflect on what I had seen and maybe figure out where I was. The dream continued.

Looking over my right shoulder towards the rear of the hall I noticed that the walls were constructed from logs three and four feet in diameter, twenty and thirty feet in length. They were roughhewn but perfectly fitted. The perfection of fit made obvious that this hall was built by the Master Builder. Recognizing His handiwork made my heart smile and I grinned. Turning away from the wall and looking back into the great hall in front of me, I suddenly saw a snapshot of the future, a picture of a time to come. In the dream, I saw a vision.

The hall had suddenly transformed from rough-hewn to finished in every detail. It was filled with joyful people. Splendor and light burst forth from every person and object within. There was music and dancing, a jubilant party. A lady dressed like some 18th century duchess at the emperor's ball, danced with a gentleman just in front of me. As she turned on his hand, she looked into my eyes. Her face beamed with delight. My heart rejoiced to see her having the time of her life because in her face I could see the marks of long-ago trials. Then it dawned on me; I was seeing the Wedding Feast. That glorious celebration was to be held right here in this hall. After glimpsing the future celebration and the dancing duchess, the vision faded and the dim cavernous nature of the hall returned. I was alone again, sitting in the folding chair with my back to the rough-hewn wall.

I looked over to the left and noticed a passageway leading behind the stage area. Just inside this passageway, I could make out a flight of stairs headed upwards. Curious, I rose from the chair to investigate. Climbing to the top of the unfinished but perfectly constructed staircase, I found myself in a hallway about 30 feet wide. I looked down the hall but couldn't see where it led. To my left was a window. I walked over to it. The window was nothing more than a hole through the log wall, about twelve inches square with three vertical bars in it. I casually grabbed the left bar with my left hand. All three bars were silver and about 1.5" in diameter. Holding the bar, I stood looking out of the window, tunneling as it were through three or four feet of log.

All I could see through the window was blue sky and a wisp of white smoke. The white smoke or maybe, cloud, made me recall what happens immediately after a new pope is elected. Although I am not Catholic, joy sprang up within me at the portent of the imagined *fumata bianca*.⁹ Standing there gazing at the white finger of smoke against the pastel sky, I felt the first waves. I had felt these waves before. It was the Judge. He was coming and with Him, I knew, a tsunami of judgment. My heart turned serious, and sober thoughts flew through my mind.

⁹ *Vatican smoke signals: The science behind the smoke*; Shoshana Davis; CBS News; viewed March 4, 2017; www.cbsnews.com/news/vatican-smoke-signals-the-science-behind-the-smoke.

*“Hold onto the window bars so you will not fall down.
—No, that’s selfish,” I answered myself.*

*“Quick! Go out into the street and warn the people that the Judge is coming.
—No, it’s too late for them. They can’t hear and they won’t listen.”*

Gripping the bar to steady myself in the rapidly growing waves of energy, I looked over my right shoulder. Across the hallway was an open double-doorway. Intuitively I knew that this doorway was the entrance into the room located above and behind the stage area of the great hall.

“Get in there while you can still move,” I told myself, “so when the Judge arrives He will find you waiting for Him in the ‘Upper Room.’ ”

I was unconcerned for myself regards the coming terrors of judgment, and the idea of waiting for my Lord in some ‘upper room’ made me smile. When He arrived, we’d share a laugh at this joke of mine.

In the moments it took to process this string of thoughts, the waves of energy grew so powerful that the massive building itself was beginning to shake. The wedding hall was trembling from the foundation upwards as if in an earthquake. Despite the violent shaking, the hall held together perfectly. Knowing I would not be able to stand much longer in the fast growing waves, that it was now or never, I risked a few awkward gaits across the bucking hallway and stumbled into the upper room. What I saw there surprised me.

Inside the room stood the bookish young man, the same young man I had seen downstairs in the great hall. He remained blind to my presence and shockingly, he had no sense that anything extraordinary was happening. He could not feel the floor bucking under his feet. He could not sense the energized atmosphere. He had no clue that the Judge of judges was about to arrive, that there would be no escape, no defense and no appeasement. It appeared that this wandering soul was about to be obliterated in apocalyptic judgment. My heart went out to the man. In my heart I cried, *“I must bless him if I can so his heart might awaken.”* I had to try. He seemed to have no other hope.

Through the thickly charged atmosphere, I lurched across the bouncing floor, threw out my hands, my right hand over his heart, my left on his back, all in an effort to bless him. I was hoping to somehow jumpstart his spiritual awakening, but it was only a wild hope driven by the cry of my heart.

The moment my hands touched his chest and back, I began falling to the floor. I could no longer stand in the oncoming presence of the Judge. I kept pressing my hands against the young man as I fell, not caring a whit about how strange I must have looked to him or how upset he may have felt about my actions. I had to help him to the end however I could. What ultimately became of the young man, I do not know. As I was hoping for him, pressing my hands against him and falling to the floor before the Judge, I awoke from the dream.

In times past I have been the young man. Like him, I have wandered about trying to find a way. At different points along the journey God in His great love has sent different men to help me find the way forward. I am indebted to their love.

4. *A Destroyer at Noonday*

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment ...” (Hebrews 10:26-27).

About ten days after visiting the wedding hall, I found myself on another adventure, this time to a church on the American plains. Everything in this vision—if that’s what it was—was more real than reality has ever been. Or maybe I was more alive to spiritual realities than ever before. Whatever it was, colors were profound. Sounds, clear and beautiful. Every sensation, rich and full of meaning.

In the experience I stood atop a hill rise in a wheat field recently harvested. I faced west. Stubble crunched under my shoes. In the center of my eyesight was a white clapboard church. It sat on the side of the upslope of the next hill, about 300 yards distant. A trickle of a stream ran through the swale between the church and me. In the uncultivated strips beside the stream, reeds and wild grasses grew. The stream bed was a mucky trickling marsh.

The grassy area around the old church wasn’t verdant. It was sparse. It had a look of occasional maintenance. The doors to the church were located on its southern end, towards my left. They swung open onto a weathered wood porch about 8’ long and as wide as the church. The little gray porch had no roof or hand rails, just a few wooden steps down to the ground.

About 30 or 40 feet south of the porch, a bit beyond the edge of the church grounds, stood two trees. They were the only trees in the landscape. Like the church, the trees were about two-thirds of the way up the opposite slope. From where I looked, the trees formed a ‘V.’ Evidently they had started growing close beside one another and as they matured, they gradually leaned out to make room for branches in between. But the upper branches fell some time ago and the two remaining trunks were weathered and broken. The limbless, lifeless trunks went ten or fifteen feet upwards and outwards to make the ‘V’ shape. The upper trunks probably served these days as a perch for the occasional bird of prey. Nearer the ground however, the trees showed signs of life. Up to about five feet high and several feet wide, they were bushy-green with new growth.

Standing wheat stretched like amber as far as I could see, which wasn’t far, only to the crest of the ridge behind the church. In the back of my mind I realized that I stood somewhere on the vast American plains. Standing wheat surrounded the churchyard, the ‘V’ trees as well as the little valley below except for the marshy area which was untillable.

With the bright sun, blue sky and a few puffy clouds sailing above, this panorama could have been a postcard or a photo from the Internet, except that everything appeared far richer and deeper than two dimensions could ever convey. Even the inanimate objects seemed to pulse with life. Everything I saw was more vibrant than I had ever seen before.

I gazed at the old wooden church. It seemed to have been kept about as well as the lawn. Just enough effort and resources were invested into it to keep it useful. The old building looked unused and no vehicles could be seen. If a dirt road or track led to it, the way was hidden by the standing wheat. I couldn’t see how anyone could have traveled to the church if they wanted to. So it seemed odd for me to think that at the present people were inside of it, a half-dozen or less. But I did.

After viewing the idyllic church and its environs for a time, I suddenly found myself standing like a greeter inside the open doors of the church, a step beyond the porch. I wore a dark suit and held a few bulletins. A pleasant and expectant atmosphere permeated the church. I was wrong about how many folks were inside. It was filled to capacity—60 or 80 people, I'd guess.

The high sun shone a few feet through the double doorway onto the aisle at my shoes. The sunlight illuminated the reddish dark wood floor, and the sunlight reflected upwards from my shiny black shoes. The sunlight on the floor was dazzling. When I looked up, my eyes needed time to re-adjust to inside lighting. When I could see inside the church again, I noticed that the choir was seated and the minister had risen to the pulpit.

That was my signal to close the two old white wooden doors and take a seat myself. But before I drew the church doors closed, I wanted to look one more time at the brilliant sunshine in the aisle. The radiance reminded me of God's glory. So I glanced down. But I didn't see sunshine at my feet. No, I didn't. What I saw gripped me. It froze me in place. There in front of my shoes was the shadow of the Judge. His dark terrifying form was outlined on the aisle, emblazoned by the sun. The Judge stood at the threshold. I could have reached out and touched Him.

“Behold, the Judge is standing right at the door” (James 5:9).

His arrival was unexpected. His coming, unseen. His approaching footsteps, I never heard. Out of the blue, right in the doorway of the little church on the plains stood the ***“Destroyer at noonday” (Jer. 15:8)***. Nobody inside knew He had arrived but me, the greeter. I was unconcerned for myself. I had been judged already. But what could I do for the others, I wondered? Nothing, I could do nothing, I knew. Time had run out for anyone inside to do anything further to prepare for this reckoning. What had been done to prepare, had been done. There would be no further preparation. God's house would be clean.

The Judge at the door emanated supremacy. None could oppose Him. None could delay His entry. None could resist His will. This was, after all, His house. So in an attitude of welcoming, I stood by and in strode the Destroyer at noonday. What followed was to my eyes, horrendous, while to my heart all seemed right and just. I stood in place and watched Him work. I was both peaceful and shocked, and unable to synthesize my opposing views. The only words I could think were, “This is just and right.” But what I saw was dreadful.

The picturesque people in the picturesque church were never aware of the Destroyer's presence. Those slain never sensed danger. Those undisturbed never sensed His passing over. Throughout this hyper-real experience, my senses tried to grasp the unthinkable event occurring, and yet my innermost heart was unmoved. All I could think was, “This is just and right.” What unfolded was by any measure other than my heart, sheer horror.

The Destroyer started at the back of the church. He quickly worked His way to the front, then through the pulpit and small choir loft. I could foretell neither who would be cut to pieces nor who would be passed over. All I could do was watch as various bodies slumped in the pews and streams of blood pooled in the aisle. It was terrifying to see and at the same time it was right to behold. God was

purifying His house, and His sword of judgment was neither benign nor random. The Bible relates this very thing. The “mother of a young man” in the passage below is the Church. ¹⁰

***“I will destroy My people;
They did not repent of their ways. ...
I will bring against them, against the mother of a young man,
A destroyer at noonday,
I will suddenly bring down on her
Anguish and dismay” (Jeremiah 15:7-8).***

Inside the little American church on the plain I saw a middle-aged white man sitting with his family get disemboweled. A moment before his death he had looked for all the world like an elder or deacon, and then the sword swung and he tipped head first from his seat, cut in half. His head smashed into the pew back in front of him and then fell with the torso to the floor. Who would have suspected that this gentleman, despite having received the knowledge of the truth, went on sinning willfully?¹¹ That was the reason he perished. He would not wrestle against his own sinful nature despite having the power of God (the Holy Spirit) within him.

An elderly black lady wearing a white dress and a white hat sat princess-like on the front pew. She was not a person of standing in the church, yet she ‘stood’ before the Judge. The Destroyer passed her by with respect.¹¹

By the time the Destroyer departed the little church on the American plains, the feeling of pleasantness in the atmosphere had vanished. In its place was something far better. An expectant verve pulsed through the place, and everybody felt it. This expectancy was good. There was power to it even if I couldn’t exactly make sense of it. In fact, I couldn’t make much sense of anything I had just seen. Something good had taken place and something great was coming, but I didn’t know what. Whatever it was would be unlike anything the world has ever seen before. The Church was about to enter into an all-new season.

This ended the vision, a vision far more real than reality. Psychologically it twisted me up for days. Here are a few things I eventually came to understand from it:

- A. That I thought only a few people were inside the church when in fact it was full, speaks to my erroneous notion of how many souls comprise the American community of believers. My vision is limited, and arrogance led me to think I know more than I really do. I repent.
- B. The church atmosphere before judgment fell—a mixture of expectancy and pleasantness—arose from the two different types of people then inside it. Because only the expectant people remained after the great judgment passed through, their expectant spirit filled the church at the end. The expectant spirit had become dominant because it was no longer hindered by those who just wanted a pleasant church experience. People who belong

¹⁰ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and “The fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27).

¹¹ Psalm 16:3

to the Church for the sake of pleasantness will not remain in the house of the Lord after His judgment cleans it out.

- C. The two trees in the vision represent the Law and the Prophets.¹² At the Root (the root of Jesse) the Law (the law written on the heart) and the Prophets are inseparable. The two trees form a ‘V’ for victory. The familiar New Testament word *overcome* infers, *to get the victory*.¹³ Overcomers are victorious.

As I write this, I ‘see’ another vision. A serious man is walking out of the old clapboard church. He’s crossing the churchyard to inspect the broken trunks and the green bushy growth beneath. This man understands horticulture. He is a serious man of God but remains spiritually unknown by the Church.

As he studies the old trees, God is giving him a picture of what they can grow to be. Seeing the trees’ potential in his mind’s eye, the man will decide to tend them. In less than a year’s time, one weekday he will sneak a rest in their shade. As the trees grow taller, he will invite select friends in the church to enjoy their shade, his closest friends first, then others. He will eventually extend the churchyard to include the trees and all church members will enjoy them and what they represent, the Law and the Prophets.

Looking further into the vision, now I ‘see’ children climbing the mature ‘V’ trees. I see a church picnic being served beneath their leafy canopy. The trees will continue to grow and eventually they will shade the church building. The ‘victory’ trees will grow greater than the horticulturist now looking at them can imagine. They will far outlive his life on earth. In the distant future, people will come to view both the trees and the old church, for the destiny of the two is entwined.

The two victory trees call to mind the oaks of Mamre mentioned in Genesis. Beneath those oaks the father of the faith dwelt, and the Lord appeared to him there (Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1). So it will be with these trees. Sons of Abraham will dwell beneath them and there they will meet with the Lord.

Conclusion

I didn’t understand any of the vision of the Destroyer at noonday when it occurred. It took me a while to get over seeing pleasant churchgoers cut to pieces in vibrant detail. What I saw disturbed me, and my wife expressed concern for my wellbeing. Days after the vision, I remained wrapped in melancholy. The clouds parted when my heart at last turned elsewhere. But the clouds only moved to the horizon of my conscience. Those clouds are still out there.

¹² *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matt. 5:17-18).*

¹³ Strong’s NT No. 3528; νικάω

Whenever I remember the suddenness and finality of this last judgment, despair rises up like a squall at sea and makes it seem as if the little boat my soul sails in will sink beneath the waves. Even some Bible stories stir up this old darkness. Biblical accounts of squandered opportunity make my face fall as my heart searches for answers too great for me to know.

To me, the most forlorn words ever put to paper are written of Esau—the man born to inherit both the birthright and the blessing of the fathers: ***“For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance although he sought for it with tears” (Heb. 12:17).***

Imagine how Esau—the eldest son in the household of faith—must have agonized when he harvested the fruit of the faithlessness he sowed: ***“he was rejected... he found no place for repentance although he sought for it with tears,”*** the Scripture says.

Who can understand a son *rejected*? Who can plumb the depths of Esau’s despair or mark the bounds of his judgment’s purpose? Why would God do such a thing? And yet the Bible says, ***“The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether” (Psa. 19:9).***

When I read of Esau’s rejection and contemplate his remorse, I must recount Jacob’s rewards. When my mind sees the deacon slumped over in the American church between his wife and children, I need to recall the serious men in the Wedding Hall. They will accomplish much. When my heart considers the judgments of God upon His household—the hardness of the aches and the sureness of their coming—I rush to remember the duchess dancing at the wedding feast. If I dwell on the agonies of judgment at the expense of the glories they produce, I will sink beneath waves of despondency and enter irredeemably into the darkness below.

While Jesus will lift me from the deep if I sink too far, and while I know my Friend and I will one day walk together hand in hand, I cannot forget that He is also a consuming fire, that in the end nothing will remain but that which is of Him.¹⁴

¹⁴ Isaiah 25:8; Hebrews 12:29

5. *A Rock Garden*

I was writing down the four previous experiences when I entered into this final vision. In this vision, I found myself working in a rock garden. Shades of gray misted me in. I couldn't see but a dozen feet distant around me, not that I cared to see further. My focus was on arranging the twelve or fifteen gem stones in front of me. The stones varied in size mostly between a baseball and a volleyball. 'Bowling ball' defined the girth and weight of three or four. Kneeling as I was, I could position a few of the beautiful stones with one hand but most required both hands to move about.

Moving one stone here, another there, turning one this way, the other that while keeping them in a group, I searched for just the right arrangement. Like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle, these stones were meant to be organized so that each would show well and at the same time complement the others. I was focused on the job at hand, determined to place each stone in just the right place when Jesus appeared.

Jesus knelt beside me. His right hand rested on my left shoulder the way a friend might do when helping you ponder something important. As we studied the project at hand, Jesus occasionally pointed suggestively with his left hand. Sometimes He moved a rock here or there to reveal a different aspect of it. Neither of us spoke. It seemed natural for us to work together without verbal communication. After spending some time helping, as suddenly as He appeared, my Friend was gone. I wasn't surprised or disappointed when Jesus left. I kept working.

Looking up momentarily from the job at hand, I saw that the garden was walled. A section of the wall was clearly visible about eight feet over to my right. The wall was built of light brown stones. The stones looked like the kind you might see on a tour of the Holy Land. The brownish stone wall seemed a little too high to casually look over, but then I don't think Heaven's Garden District is the type of neighborhood where one climbs up to spy out his neighbor's plot. I went back to my work.

As I continued arranging and rearranging the stones, I sensed that few would walk the path that wound through this garden, although those who would visit—those to whom the garden belonged, were destined to walk it many times. I was working the arrangement of stones when Jesus reappeared.

I don't know how long Jesus was gone or where He went but there He stood smiling. His arms were laden with more brilliant stones, as many as a strong man can carry. I had no idea where He found them or why He brought them to this garden. Maybe Jesus thought they would look nice here. Whatever the reasoning, Jesus looked immensely pleased with His new load of precious gems. About five feet away from where I kneeled, He dropped them to the ground. The beautiful rocks piled where they fell, to be arranged another time.

I looked at the new pile of gemstones and then back up at Jesus. Although he had just dropped every stone He was carrying, He was somehow holding one more. The new rock He held was bigger than all the others, much bigger. It weighed at least 100 pounds. Maybe it weighed 200 lbs. He cradled it in both arms. I don't know how Jesus got it without going anywhere but there He stood holding this oblong rock heavier than I can hold. The big shiny stone was polished and rounded at its ends. It looked like a Biblical Ebenezer, a stone of remembrance, but far more beautiful than some muddy rock schlepped from the Jordan River bed to commemorate its crossing.¹⁵

¹⁵ Joshua 4:8

As Jesus held the Ebenezer, he smiled boyishly as if to say, *Some prize!* His smile struck me as humorous because it made me remember the classic children's book *Charlotte's Web* and how the selfless spider, Charlotte, had spun the same message—*Some Prize!*, into her web. As Charlotte spun her message, she spent the last drops of her life in hopes of saving her friend, Wilbur the pig, from becoming breakfast bacon.¹⁶ The way Jesus smiled it felt like He had been right there beside me the night I read it and I cried like a school girl.

As I chuckled over those sweet memories, Jesus dropped the *Some Prize!* Ebenezer onto the grass. It sunk a few inches into the grassy soil and took on a look of permanence. I thought we might be arranging around it whenever we started work in its area. But maybe not. My Friend had held it up by Himself so maybe later we can move it about if need be. Anyway that great gemstone and the other pile of stones He had just delivered might be stories for another time. That thought concluded the vision of the rock garden. Here's what I think I understand of it.

The rock display of 12 or so gemstones is this paper you're reading. Each gemstone represents some glory that came about through God's judgments within His house. God's judgments work eternal wonders in His people.

In a general sense, the rock garden vision was mostly colorless because my comprehension of where I was in heaven and what I was doing there was muted. Although the garden atmosphere was sweet, a grayness closed me in. The few times I looked up from my work, I only saw 10 or 15 feet out from where I was kneeling. My limited view reinforces how circumscribed my spiritual acumen is. I don't know much. In fact the more I learn the greater my realization is of how little I know. But I know one thing.

I know that the judgments of God, while they can be as difficult to endure as dragging a cross uphill or riding an elevator into hell, are meant to create glories as beautiful as great gemstones in the lives of believers. St. Paul came to this same conclusion. He wrote, ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).***

Press on, beloved.

Amen.

¹⁶ *Charlotte's Web*; E. B. White; Harper & Brothers (1952).